NOVEMBER 2019

AFRICA

PLAYBOY

IN HIS DOMAIN
HOW A HUMBLE SKATEBOARDER BUILT A STREETWEAR EMPIRE!

A NEW MASCULINITY
ACTOR-ACTIVIST MATT MCGORRY AND OTHERS EXPLORE THE IDEA

ON THIN ICE
HOW ICELAND'S TOURIST BOOM COULD BE A CLIMATE CRISIS!

CELEBRITY PROFILE
WE GET REAL WITH SILICON VALLEY STAR THOMAS MIDDLEDITCH

HIGH DINING
A CREATIVE CHEF CHANGES HOW WE THINK ABOUT FINE CUISINE... AND CANNABIS

NANNETTE Hammond | ANDREA Prince

WWW.PLAYBOY.CO.ZA 4.99 USD

19016

9 772517 959409

PLAYBOYSHOP
PLAYBOYSHOP
PLAYBOYSHOP

SHOP THE ESSENTIALS

PLAYBOYSHOP.COM

EVERY. ISSUE. EVER.

The complete Playboy archive

Instant access to every issue, article, story, and pictorial Playboy has ever published – only on iPlayboy.com.

VISIT PLAYBOY.COM/ARCHIVE

PLAYBOY
AFRICA

Editor-in-Chief **Dirk Steenekamp**

Associate Editor **Jason Fleetwood**

Graphic Designer **Koketso Moganetsi**

Fashion Editor **Lexie Robb**

Grooming Editor **Greg Forbes**

Gaming Editor **Andre Coetzer**

Tech Editor **Peter Wolff**

Illustrations **Toon53 Productions**

Motoring Editor **John Page**

Senior Photo Editor **Luba V Nel**

ADVERTISING SALES **pieter@dhsmedia.co.za**

for more information

PHONE: +27 10 006 0051
MAIL: PO Box 71450, Bryanston, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2021
ADDRESS: First Floor Block 6 Fourways Office Park, Cnr Roos Street & Fourways Boulevard, 2191
EMAIL: info@dhsmedia.co.za
WEB: www.playboy.co.za
FACEBOOK: facebook.com/PlayBAfrica
INSTAGRAM: playboymag_africa

PLAYBOY ENTERPRISES, INTERNATIONAL
Hugh M. Hefner, FOUNDER

U.S. PLAYBOY
Ben Kohn, Chief Executive Officer
Cooper Hefner, Chief Creative Officer
Michael Phillips, SVP, Digital Products
James Rickman, Executive Editor

PLAYBOY INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING
Reena Patel, Chief Commercial Officer & Head of Operations
Hazel Thomson, Senior Director, International Licensing

PLAYBOY Africa is published by DHS Media House in South Africa for South Africa. Material in this publication, including text and images, is protected by copyright. It may not be copied, reproduced, republished, posted, broadcast, or transmitted in any way without written consent of DHS Media House. The views and opinions expressed in PLAYBOY Africa by the contributors may not represent the views of the publishers. DHS Media House accepts no responsibility for any loss that may be suffered by any person who relies totally or partially upon any information, description, or pictures contained herein. DHS Media House is not liable for any mistake, misprint, or typographic errors. Any submissions to PLAYBOY Africa become the property of DHS Media House. The name "PLAYBOY" and the PLAYBOY logo are registered trademarks of PLAYBOY USA, and used under license by (publisher). All rights reserved. The United States edition of PLAYBOY is published monthly by PLAYBOY.

ATIBA JEFFERSON

For Man in His Domain, the L.A.-based lifestyle photographer shadowed Keith Hufnagel, the skate mogul behind HUF, to capture his relationship with the streets of San Francisco. "I've looked up to Hufnagel since I was a kid and have had the opportunity to photograph him several times," says Jefferson, who contributes to Thrasher magazine and whose clients have included Nike, Supreme and the L.A. Lakers. "I see him as both a hero and an old friend."

DR. CHRIS DONAGHUE

The goal of this issue's Playboy Advisor? To remind us that sex is supposed to be fun. The Loveline host and author of Rebel Love: Break the Rules, Destroy Toxic Habits and Have the Best Sex of Your Life says, "Our culture is extremely pleasurephobic. What's more, capitalist culture tells us our worth should be tied to productivity. That's why seeking pleasure is such a powerful act of resistance."

KANYA IWANA

"If we portray only a minor chunk of people, we do the world a disservice," says Iwana. "So many are concerned about the idea of the 'other,' when the truth is we're all alike — as insignificant as we are special." The photographer carries this appreciation for diversity into her shoots with renowned cannabis chef Andrea Drummer (High Dining).

ALPHACHANNELING

Pleasure — which the erotic illustrator views as "the overwhelming state of being in harmony, where the boundary of what is internal and external dissolves" — is the driving force behind Alphachanneling's artwork. Featured in this issue's Playboy Advisor a longside sex tips and relationship advice, Alphachanneling's illustrations of bodies engaging in various forms of bliss evoke both grace and carnality, and are a toast to sexual liberation.

CONTENTS

8 **WORLD OF PLAYBOY**
Behind the lens with the visual artists who capture beauty, arousal and eroticism

10 **TECH**
Get amped as we check out 7 of the best fitness trackers on the market

14 **NOIR NOUVEAU**
After much silence, we explore actor Edward Norton's return to form

16 **PICTORIAL**
Sarah E. Evans. In a feature that will leave you wanting more

24 **FILM**
Joker brings an iconic grin back while we consider why the diabolical hedonist continues to captivate us

28 **MAN IN HIS DOMAIN: KEITH HUFNAGEL**
How a humble skateboarder built a streetwear empire — without diluting the love that started it all

32 **PICTORIAL**
Tahlia Paris. The shy girl oozing confidence in front of the camera

40 **THE PLAYBOY SYMPOSIUM**
Actor-activist Matt McGorry and a range of thinkers look toward a new masculinity

48 **GUEST ADVISOR: DR. CHRIS DONAGHUE**
The Loveline host weighs in on a range of sexual quandaries

52 **COVER FEATURE**
Nannette Hammond and Andrea Prince together in a sensational spread

60 **TRAVEL: ON THIN ICE**
Can Iceland handle a climate crisis and a tourism boom?

66 **20 QUESTIONS: THOMAS MIDDLEDITCH**
In real life, the Silicon Valley star is nothing like the nerd he's played for six years; trust us

70 **PICTORIAL**
Lisa Cannon. The beautiful model from Sydney, Australia now lives and Las Vegas, USA. She sporty and adventurous with a love of delicious food

78 **HIGH DINING**
Chef Andrea Drummer is changing how we think about fine cuisine — and canna-justice

84 **PICTORIAL**
Bridget Stavoy. The Irish beauty's moto in life is to make to make the most of everything

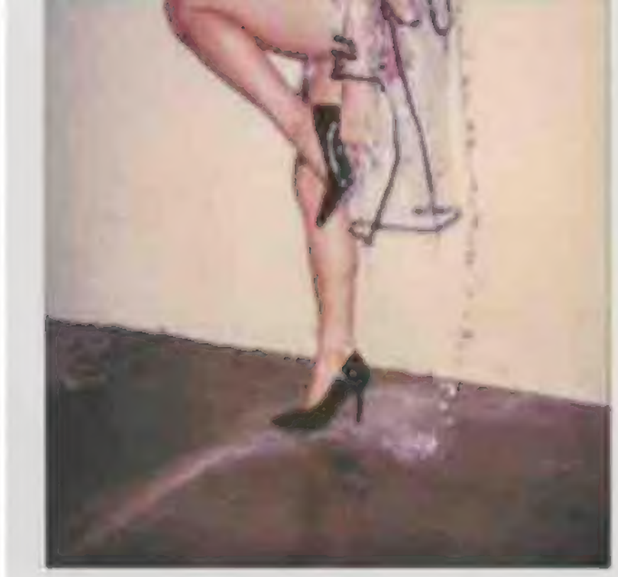
92 **HERITAGE: THE ULTIMATE MALE FANTASY**
Forty years ago, six icons of queer America took center stage at the world's hetero mecca

ON THE COVER
Nannette Hammond & Andrea Prince
Photography by Mike Prada
No 29 | **November 2019**

"If you're a fan of business, I think you're really going to enjoy pleasure."

SHOP THE
RABBIT
PLAYBOY
PLAYBOY
One-of-a-kind products.
The official site for Playboy clothing,
exclusive collections, accessories, and more.
VISIT PLAYBOYSHOP.COM

Behind the Lens

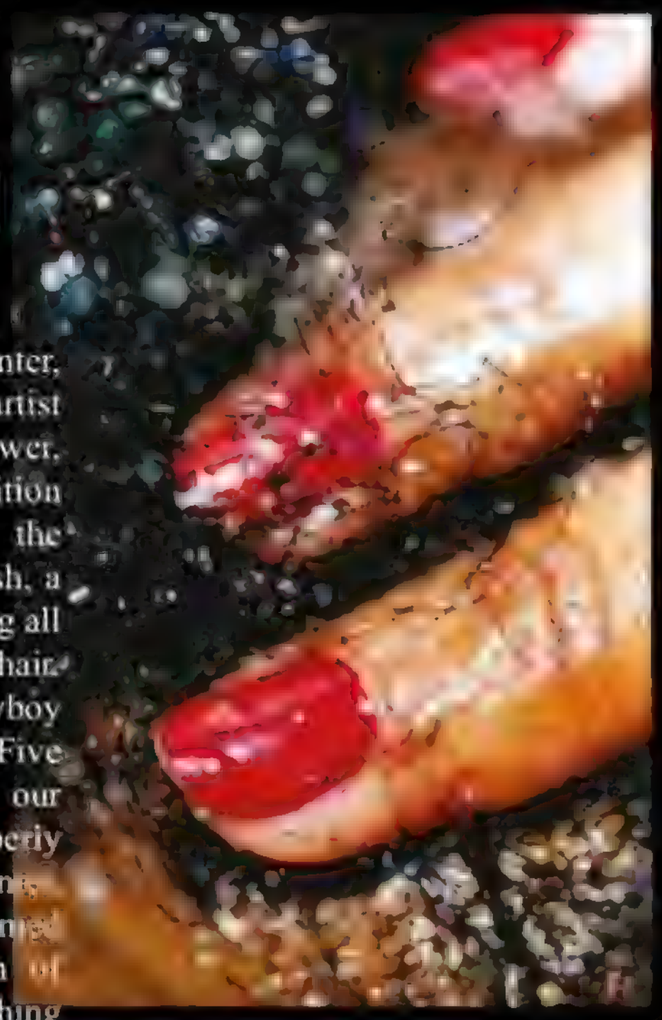


It's easy to become so entranced by the women who appear in our pages that you may not always consider the visual artists behind the images. But you should. These photographers are helping to evolve what we internally refer to as "the Playboy gaze"; they're the curators of our representations of beauty, arousal and eroticism. It's no coincidence that our contributing photographers include creatives who challenge tired, sexist standards of beauty throughout their portfolios. This is especially true of our Playmate photographers, whose charge is to make their subjects feel simultaneously comfortable, sexy and in command.

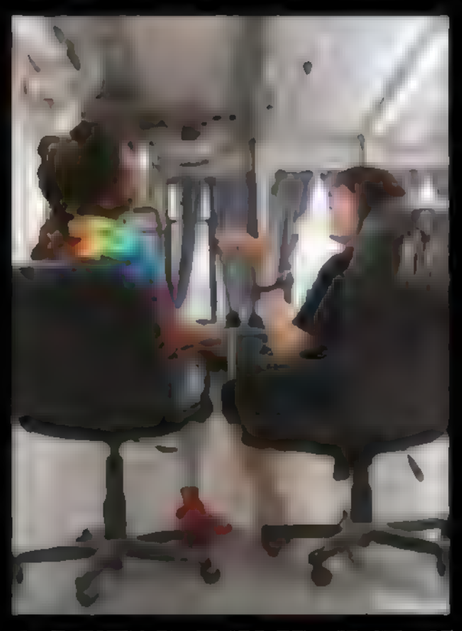
We're proud to recognize the powerful women responsible for this issue's Playmate pictorials. Ali Mitton, who last photographed April 2019 Playmate Fo Porter, flew with Hilda Dias Pimentel to Majorca, Spain, where the October Playmate unleashed her jubilant energy. Meanwhile, Kanya Iwana headed to the beach in Malibu, California with November Playmate Gillian Chan, and Australian transplant Jennifer Stenglein ventured to Joshua Tree, California with Jordy Murray, our December Playmate. We know that those who stand behind the lens are as important to representation as those in front of it, and we celebrate these women and their gorgeous, inspiring work.

Lens

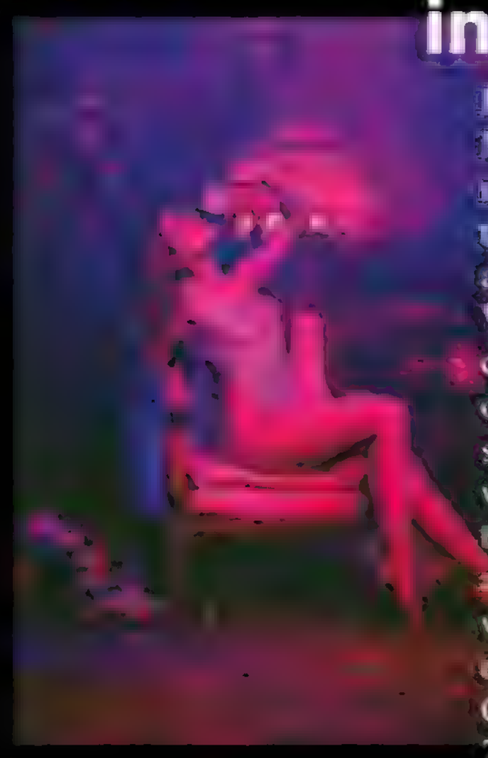
Au Naturel in Focus



The works of Marilyn Minter, subject of this issue's artist spotlight, Pussy Power, appeared in a special edition of playboy in 2014 — the same year she released Plush, a collection of artwork saluting all shades and lengths of pubic hair. But some of Minter's playboy images went unpublished. Five years later, she returns to our pages to discuss with Kimberly Drew (together with Mint, lower right) what is deemed "appropriate" in the realm of sexual display. "There's nothing wrong with pubic hair, but it has been totally erased in art history," Minter says. While negotiating the publication of Minter's playboy commission (as well as new, never-before-seen work), Senior Editor Liz Suman also arranged for her to speak at the "Art of Sexuality" panel hosted by Playboy in New York City this June. "Learning that not all the previous images had been published was exciting, knowing I could consciously publish the work today," Suman says. "The stigma surrounding pubic hair exemplifies the conflict within dialogues about women defining their own beauty and pleasure."

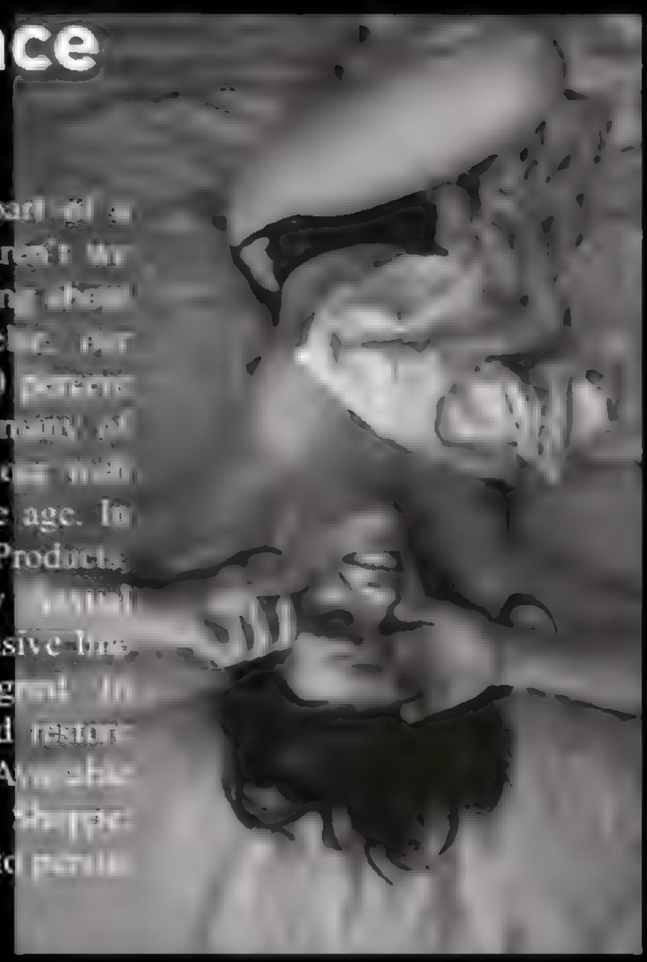


Shakespeare in the Garden



Playboy's annual Midsummer Night's Dream lingerie party returned this July to Sin City, taking over Marquee Nightclub at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Inspired by Shakespeare's classic tale of restless lovers on a mystical search for their soulmates, Playboy partnered with Tao Group to transform the nightlife destination into an enchanted forest, complete with spins by DJ Mustard. The event was hosted by a cast of Centerfolds, including August 2018 Playmate Lorena Medina (pictured left).

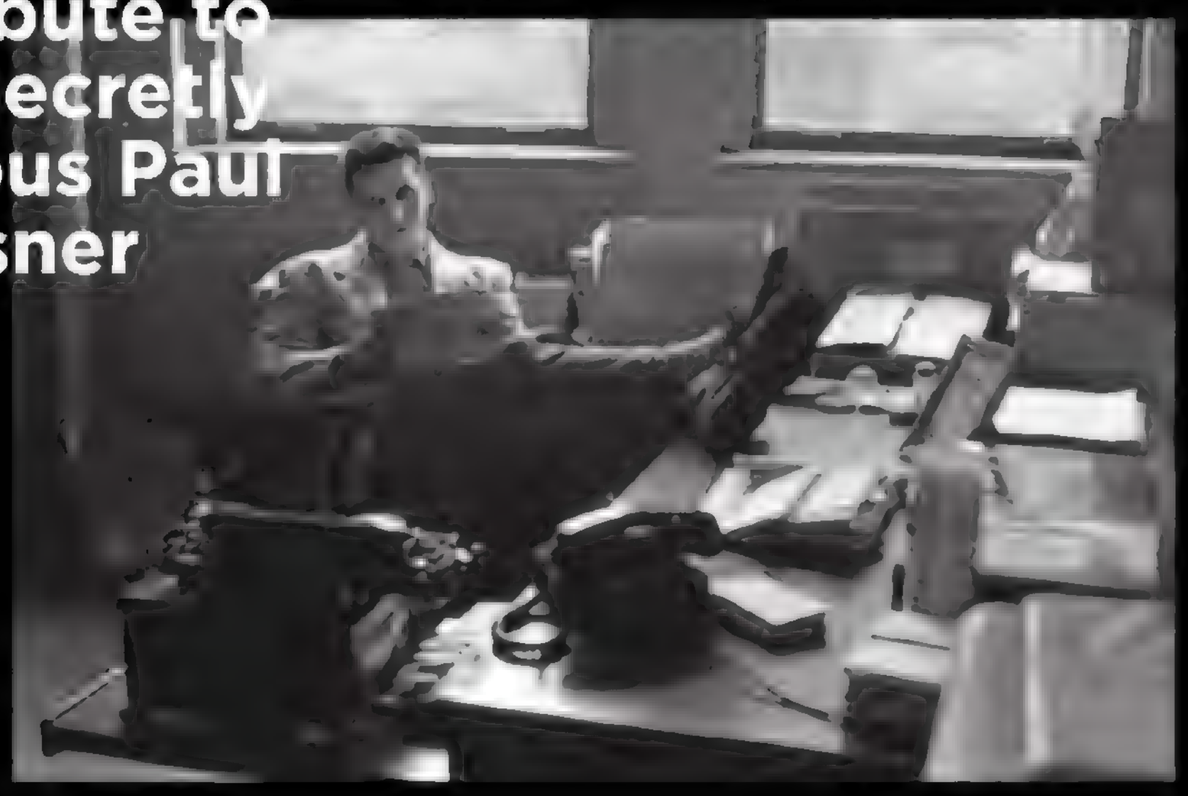
Confidence Is Sexy



Sex is an important part of a healthy life, so why aren't we more comfortable talking about it? Like everything else, our sex lives won't be 100 percent all the time, and too many of us ignore that part of our well-being, especially as we age. In partnership with AVS Products, we introduce Playboy Sexual Wellness, a comprehensive line of supplements designed to reinvigorate, repair and restore your sexual health. Available now at Vitamin Shoppe. Consider yourself free to pursue pleasure.

Paul Krassner, leader of the Yippie movement, passed away in July at the age of 87. A prominent force at playboy, the longtime editor recruited major names including former Editorial Director Arthur Kretchmer and Lenny Bruce. (Krassner edited the comedian's autobiography.) Despite his strong opinions, Krassner kept an open mind, even agreeing to debate Andrew Breitbart for our December 2011 issue. Former Deputy Editor Stephen Randall fondly remembers Krassner as "a cultural gadfly who knew everyone worth knowing and who took things seriously — but hid that he was taking them seriously."

A Tribute to the Secretly Serious Paul Krassner



Track Your Fitness!

We don't only just know the best ways to keep you on top of your game! With scientific approaches targeting all human muscles and weights, especially with Thanksgiving and Christmas around the corner, it actually, does not matter if you're a fitness fanatic or only want to know all important steps in order to get fit in a time

Fitbit Charge 3

Fitbit has become the go-to manufacturer for fitness trackers and it's not hard to see why. The Charge 2 device was fantastic and now with the third iteration, the company has refined its flagship tracker. With a more lightweight design and a sleeker overall look, and a bigger and clearer display than its rivals, the Fitbit Charge 3 offers large amounts of insight into your overall health. Sadly it's still a black and white screen and there is no sign of the much-requested onboard GPS, but as before syncing up to your phone solves that conundrum. If you enjoy the whole Fitbit app and experience and would also like access to notifications and Fitbit's fantastic sleep tracking, you'll want to opt for this as it's one of the company's best trackers ever.

Huawei Band 3 Pro

Not everyone can afford to spend a small fortune on a fitness tracker and that's where the Huawei band 3 Pro steps in. It offers both style and substance at a very attractive wallet-friendly budget. The Band 3 Pro comes with GPS onboard, it has a water-resistant design as well as a 0.95-inch color screen to display all of your stats on your wrist. Packed with features like a precise heart rate monitor and activity tracking, the Band 3 Pro is a great little device for newbies to the fitness tracking world as well as anyone looking for an affordable entry-level device.

Garmin Vivosmart 4

Garmin has offered some impressive trackers over the years, especially catering to the more serious athletes and fitness fanatics. The Garmin Vivosmart 4, however, is aimed at your more casual fitness fan who wants to track their fitness levels but also wants an attractive band around their wrists. This does not mean the Vivosmart 4 is light on features however, it has a much bigger screen than previous iterations and a week-long battery life. There's also an innovative feature called body battery that helps you learn when exactly is the best time for you to exercise depending on how much energy you have. This is great for those who are just as interested in their recovery and general wellbeing as they are clocking up the miles

Honor Band 4

Another budget-friendly device, the Honor Band 4 is considerably cheaper than most devices on the market and it'll offer good tracking for the casual runner plus it comes with a stunning color OLED display. As lovely as the display is, it does come on a rather small screen, so people looking for an easy to read display might be disappointed. It also lacks any form of GPS which might put some people off. However that is not the point of the Honor Band 4 device, instead, they've focused on offering a small yet affordable package with all the fitness essentials and at a very competitive price.

Amazfit Bip

The biggest difference with the Amazfit Bip, compared to other trackers on this list, is its looks. It's definitely inspired by the Apple Watch look and stands out more as a smartwatch than a fitness tracker. Yet don't let its looks fool you, there is a feature-packed fitness tracker hidden behind its smartwatch appearance. It offers features like built-in GPS, an accurate heart rate tracker, multi-sport tracking, sleep tracking, and a very impressive battery life. It's a lightweight device that offers both a reflective always-on color touch display and the usual smartwatch features that one would expect from a fitness tracker. If you're in the market for a smartwatch that doubles up as a feature-filled fitness tracker then the Amazfit Bip might just be for you.

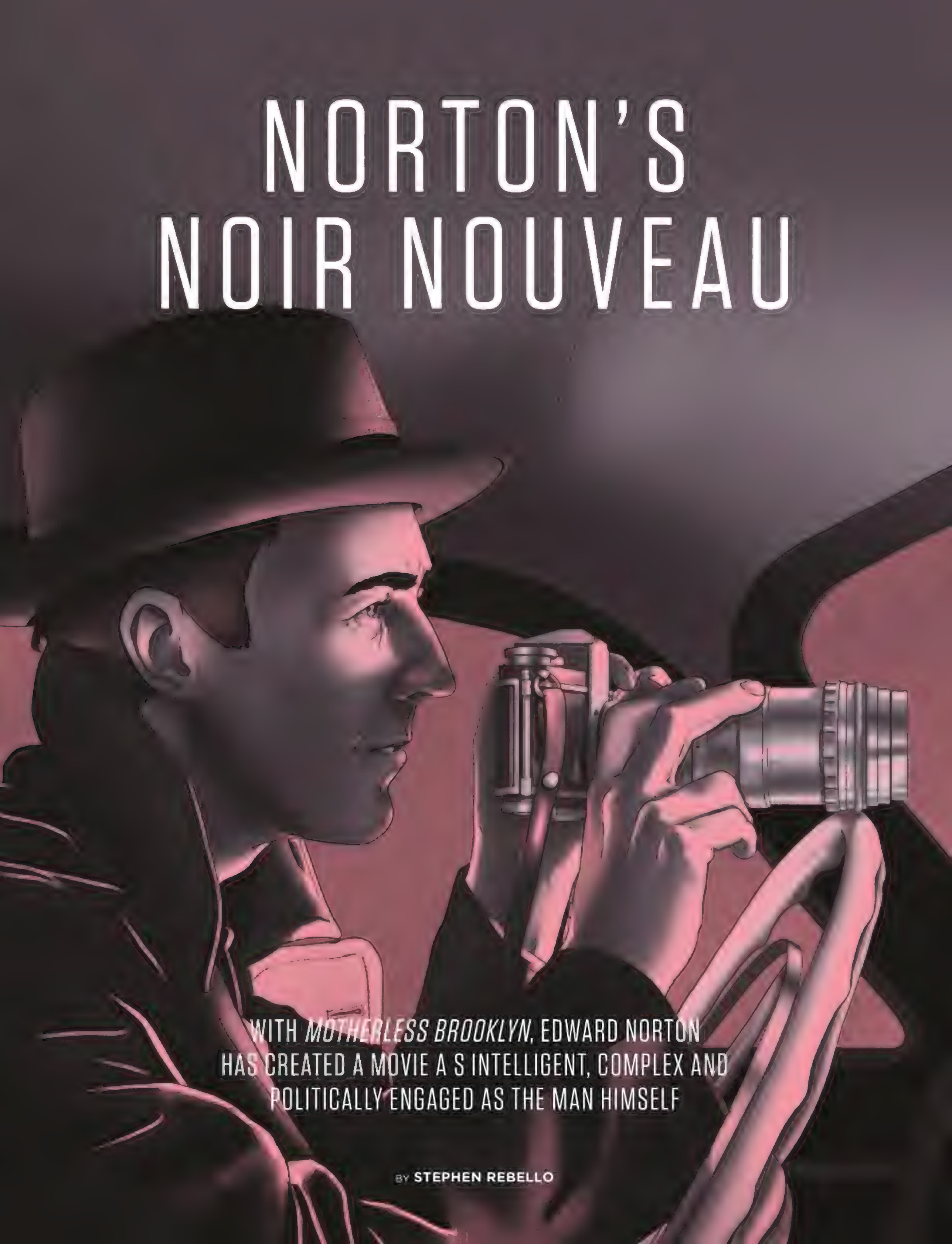
Moov Now

Unlike other trackers on this list, the Moov Now is a slightly older device that is very limited on features, yet it's still seen by many as the perfect everyday tracking companion. It's incredibly cheap when compared to the other trackers and it has an unbelievable six-month battery life. Of course, the Moov Now does not have a screen, nor does it have heart tracking, but it does include step, boxing, and rep-based training as well as a swimming mode on top of run coaching and sleep monitoring features. In comparison to other devices, this one might be light on features, but if you prefer your tracker to be simple, to the point, and cost-effective, then the Moov Now is a very good option to consider.

Samsung Galaxy Fit e

Arguably one of the best low-priced devices on the market, Samsung's Galaxy Fit e devices have a very slick looking design, a week-long battery and they can track a variety of activities from swimming to cycling. The Fit e also features a heart rate monitor. The only drawback is that there's no GPS on this tracker and it only comes with a black and white display. Naturally, if you own a Samsung smartphone or other android device, the Galaxy Fit e syncs perfectly with your phone and comes with some interesting app choices. With a solid set of features, a budget-friendly price and an attractive design, this device from the South Korean giants is without-a-doubt a solid choice in the competitive fitness tracking market.

NORTON'S NOIR NOUVEAU



WITH *MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN*, EDWARD NORTON HAS CREATED A MOVIE A S INTELLIGENT, COMPLEX AND POLITICALLY ENGAGED AS THE MAN HIMSELF

BY **STEPHEN REBELLO**

The thing about Edward Norton is he was never really here — or so it seemed. Sure, as a 26-year-old in his first big movie, 1996's *Primal Fear*, his hair-raising performance as a possibly homicidal altar boy nabbed him an Oscar nomination. Critics and moviegoers started asking, between breathless comparisons to everyone from DiCaprio to Hoffman, *Who is this guy?*

But as vivid as he could be on-screen, offscreen Norton ghosted us all. Letting the work tell the story, he made a shell game out of his dealings with the press, shunning interviews and ducking questions about his personal life — especially when he bulked up by 30 pounds and scored a best actor Oscar nomination for his gut-wrenching neo-Nazi turn in 1998's *American History X*.

Through the aughts, Norton continued to protect his off-camera life while keeping his screen profile high, if unclassifiable. He mostly avoided Hollywood cash grabs, gravitating instead to a range of complex roles: a pornographer's soft- spoken lawyer, a feckless drug dealer, a bipolar dude with a latent flair for violence, a green superhero with rage issues and an egomaniacal actor — for, respectively, cream-of-the-crop directors MiloS Forman (*The People vs. Larry Flynt*), Spike Lee (*25th Hour*), David Fincher (*Fight Club*), Louis Leterrier (*The Incredible Hulk*) and Alejandro G. Iñárritu (*Birdman;* yet another Oscar nomination).

By then a certain reputation had emerged, one fed by Norton's widely publicized head-on collisions with the directors of *American History X* and *Red Dragon* and the battles with Marvel that likely factored into Mark Ruffalo taking over as the Hulk. One common denominator: By many accounts, if Norton thought a script needed an overhaul, he'd doctor it himself and try to persuade the director to get onboard.

Then he went relatively quiet, aside from supporting turns in *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and *Collateral Beauty*, and voice stints in *Sausage Party* (he helped Seth Rogen get that one made) and *Isle of Dogs*. Was Norton staging a vanishing act? Had he become one of those actors, per endless online speculation, that *Hollywood won't hire?*

Not so fast. Aside from being busy as a husband (to movie producer Shauna Robertson), the father of a now six-year-old son, a scuba diver and pilot, a tireless environmental advocate, a trustee of an affordable-housing nonprofit and a producer on more than a dozen documentaries and feature films (including last year's Gotti), Norton has been quietly preparing to step back into the spotlight.

The $26 million movie *Motherless Brooklyn*, in wide release this November, revolves around his performance as Lionel Essrog — a sad, solitary private detective with Tourette syndrome who struggles to make sense of a morally and politically rancid world following the murder of his mobbed-up mentor (Bruce Willis). Watching the gritty yet open- heartedly romantic movie, which Norton also directed, produced and adapted from Jonathan Lethem's 1999 novel, you can almost feel the man stepping out and showing us what matters to him, what's eating at him, what he thinks of the state of things in America in 2019. *So that's who Edward Norton is.*

Speaking almost as rapidly and obsessively as his gumshoe protagonist, Norton describes his near 20-year campaign to launch the movie, whose knockout cast includes Alec Baldwin, Willem Dafoe, Bobby Cannavale, Gugu Mbatha-Raw (pictured above with Norton in a scene from the film), Michael K. Williams and Leslie Mann. "My emotional connection to the book was this character who lets you know from the beginning, 'I've got something wrong with my head,' " he says. "You almost instinctively feel aligned with him from square one, because you're inside his brain and you feel how fucked-up and chaotic his condition is. You can hear from deep down inside that he's not, as people call him, a 'freak show' but a smart, sensitive soul. In many ways, he's in the best tradition of afflicted underdog heroes, like in *Rain Man, Forrest Gump, A Beautiful Mind, Good Will Hunting*. We connect with our better selves by cheering for them."

While Lethem set his novel in contemporary New York, Norton's script throws things back to paranoid, bigoted urban life in the 1950s, pitting his hero against a set of social attitudes, prejudices and politically powerful monsters that, in the dark shadow of current events, seem all too apt. "I wanted to do a serious noir," he explains, "not the clichéd, glossy, Americanized dime-store version — a movie that said, 'Look, there's a lot of skeevy shit going on, a lot of stuff churning underneath the surface, and we ignore it at our peril.' I mean, it isn't coincidental that *Chinatown* arrived on the cusp of Watergate, the end of the Vietnam war and after its director's wife had been murdered by Manson followers. I set this movie in a 1950s New York that was beyond crime, when things were being done at a level so antagonistic to what we think of as 'America' that the city was under the almost autocratic, imperial rule of a Darth Vader who exerted his will on everything."

As perfectionistic and self-critical as Norton can be about his work behind and before the camera (of this project he admits, "I have a sort of creeping contentment about it"), he's effusive when it comes to his collaborators — including his aforementioned Darth Vader, played by Baldwin.

"Alec has such a unique combination of charm and terrible power to intimidate," Norton says. "I wrote quite an aria for him, a celebration of brute power. And when he dug down and delivered that monologue in which his character talks about how, if he wanted to do it with a 'colored girl' in a hotel room, then pow, he was going to do it as his right and privilege, he was lethal. I saw the crew's jaws hit the floor."

Cast as the movie's most abusive power broker, Baldwin conjures the toxic essence of the influential predators and racists currently making headlines. Therein may lie the key to Norton's elusive, undeniable genius.

"The best feeling," he says, "is when it resonates like a tuning fork with the times we live in." ■

ILLUSTRATION BY **SARAH MAXWELL**

SARAH E. EVANS

Photography by **NINO BATISTA @NINOBATISTA**

Model **@SARAHE.EVANS**

This small town Texas fitness model, Sarah e. Evans reveals a little bit of herself to us and leaves us wanting more.

Tell us something surprising about you?
I actually have a funny witty side, but very few get to see it.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
Absolutely! Honestly it has been something I have always wanted to do. The funny thing is, I never told anyone. I see it as a dream coming true for sure!

What inspires you?
There are many things that inspire me, but knowing that other women are inspired by me and the things that I have accomplished inspires me even more to continue to make my dreams a reality. I receive messages all the time from other women who are also mothers asking how to get their bodies back, how to manage it all in a day, and how to start a career in modeling after motherhood. They don't know they are an inspiration to me.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modeling?
Modeling has always been something I wanted to do, but it wasn't till the last few years being in the fitness industry that I really started to pursue it. The change in the industry of it's standards and social media has made it easier than ever for someone like myself who isn't 5'7 and a stick figure to be a model.

Who do you look up to in the modeling industry?
I LOVE Cindy Crawford because she is has a look of class and timeless beauty. Currently there are many models who are breaking into the scene that are far from the stereotype and I find them admirable for doing something that they truly want to do.

What are some of your hobbies?
I am a baseball girl, so I enjoying going to the games or watching at home. Other hobbies of mine include working out, traveling to Disney World and the beach, coming up with new photo shoot concepts, and simply hanging with family on the patio while grilling.

Name three things on your bucket list?
A few things on my bucket list include traveling to Santorini, Greece, swimming with the pigs in the Bahamas, and definitely being on the cover of Playboy!!!!

Turn-ons
A true gentleman, respectful, fit and takes care of himself, passionate, honest, take charge kind of guy and of course a good sense of humor.

Turn-offs
Self absorbed, dishonest, and being over confident.

Describe to us your perfect date.
The perfect date is not always a wine and dine event. For me, having him cook while watching the baseball game and having a good conversation is always perfect.

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
There are so many capitals around the world rich in h story that I would love to visit. However a visit to Rome, Italy may be first. I find the history there so fascinating and then you add the romance, art, architecture, the food, ok my list could go on!

What is your mantra?
My mantra would be " All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them." - Walt Disney I find this so true and live by it, it takes a little work in making your dreams come true.

THE JOKER

WITS AND GIGGLES

With Joker bringing an iconic grin back to theaters, we consider why the diabolical hedonist continues to captivate us — even if we never figure him out

BY **ANTHONY BREZNICAN**

It's the bared teeth. Slightly yellow but still gleaming between the candy-apple lips. Clenched and hungry. Ruthless. You wouldn't call the Joker's expression a smile — not unless you were kidding yourself.

There's agony in the villain's bloodthirsty grin. There's rage behind the eyes, battling against the pain for dominance. Maybe there's a smear of satisfaction — let's face it, the man loves his work — but he isn't necessarily happy. He's ferocious.

In the nearly eight decades since he began menacing the good people of Gotham City, the Joker has taken on many identities, worn many faces and had many names. Just like the devil himself.

Still, for all his varying origin stories, he's instantly recognizable, and not just for the green hair, pale skin and purple suits. All Jokers share an unrepentant delight in chaos for its own sake; their antics aim to torment the helpless and innocent, and they're always able to spring surprises on Batman, a hero who prides himself on preparing for the worst.

In its official character biography, DC Comics lists the Joker's defining power as "complete unpredictability." That aligns perfectly with his latest screen incarnation which released on October 4. Joaquin Phoenix stars in the savage, heartbreaking R-rated character drama titled simply Joker. The film spirals into the ruined psychology of a man named Arthur Fleck, a wannabe stand-up comic who makes ends meet as a clown for hire on Gotham's mean streets. Crippling mental illness and a long history of abuse make it increasingly difficult for Fleck to deal with life's mounting indignities and defeats. He's a constant punch line, until the day he snaps and decides to hit back. But in true Joker fashion, each of the film's seeming revelations only raises more uncertainty about its main character.

"I really like the idea of something that challenges the audience," Phoenix tells PLAYBOY. "Every time I felt we were certain about what motivated his actions, I became less interested. We would constantly try to challenge ourselves while making it. There's not one moment, not one catalyst that creates this character. The pleasure for me in being part of it was not having the easy answers."

The Wayne family looms over the story, but there's no giant bat here; the Joker's nemesis is within. This is the DC Comics version of *Taxi Driver*, or *The King of Comedy* featuring Norman Bates instead of Rupert Pupkin. It's no coincidence that Robert De Niro turns up as a late-night talk-show host revered by the main character.

Arthur Fleck is a name comic book fans won't recognize, an original creation of director and co-writer Todd Phillips, the filmmaker behind the *Hangover* trilogy. Phillips acknowledges that he could have made the same movie about a struggling comedian who turns homicidal without any of the DC Comics framework. But what's the fun in that?

"There's a spirit in me, and I know it's in Joaquin, of taking something revered and fucking with it a little," Phillips says. "The comic-book movie world is this unstoppable machine, and this movie isn't going to stop it and probably won't change it. But to take it and turn it on its head a little? That's actually very Joker."

The film does honor one part of the Joker tradition: It clashes with everything that came before. "It's a great character for filmmakers, writers, comic book artists and actors to have fun with and play with, because there are no rules," Phillips says. "That's the point: What kind of rules are you going to break with the Joker?"

As the villain tells Batman in 1988's graphic novel *The Killing Joke*, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by Brian Bolland, "If I'm going to have a past, I prefer it to be multiple choice! *Ha ha ha!*"

No one needs to hear Batman's origin story again. Schoolchildren can recite the details of Thomas and Martha Wayne's

ILLUSTRATION BY **BUTCHER BILLY**

alleyway death — and young Bruce's vow for justice — like the pledge of allegiance. The Joker, by contrast, has always been an enigma, a chameleon, a shape-shifter. Comic book scribes and moviemakers have outdone one another in recent decades, creating a panoply of alt-histories for this snickering trickster. None of the Joker backstories is more true or valid than any of the others, and that's how DC prefers to keep it.

"Like a lot of mysterious characters, he works because we don't know his origin — and he's often portrayed as an unreliable narrator," says comics legend Jim Lee, DC's publisher and chief creative officer. "Even when he's telling you, 'This is how I came to be,' you don't know if it's the truth or not.'"

That became a defining part of director Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight*, in which Heath Ledger, in his Oscar-winning turn as the Joker, uses a ventriloquist-dummy voice to unspool conflicting tall tales about his ghastly facial scars. Tragic backstories can create empathy for a character, says screenwriter David S. Goyer, who has a "story by" credit on the 2008 box-office juggernaut. The filmmakers were more interested in arousing fear and anxiety, and nothing accomplishes that like someone lying to your face.

"We thought we shouldn't do an origin story," Goyer says. "We should just make him exist, and furthermore, we should make him slippery, with these sort of *Choose Your Own Adventure* origin stories. When we first posed that to Warner Bros., even after the success of *Batman Begins*, they balked: 'How can you do that?' and 'Which one of these is true?' We said, 'You're never going to get the answer.' That's one of the reasons he was truly scary."

The Joker first appeared, without explanation, in the spring of 1940, cutting a path of murder, robbery and mayhem through Gotham City in Batman No. 1. The Caped Crusader himself had debuted less than a year earlier, as a masked vigilante in *Detective Comics No. 27*. As the crime fighter's popularity

soared, the Joker became a way for creators Bob Kane and Bill Finger to pit their stoic, shadowy hero against a flamboyant, wisecracking foil. Even in their first clash, the Joker manages to draw out Bruce Wayne's sense of humor. "You may be the Joker, but I'm the king of clubs," Batman says, delivering a groaner of a dad joke with a right hook to the Joker's jaw.

Eleven years after the character's debut, Finger wrote a backstory in 1951's Detective Comics No. 168 that identifies the Joker as the Red Hood, a burglar in a tuxedo and a faceconcealing crimson dome who is discolored and disfigured after plunging into a vat of chemicals during a failed heist. The Killing Joke expanded on Finger's story 37 years later by adding that the Joker had been a struggling stand-up comedian before he became the Red Hood out of financial desperation. The 2014–2015 comics series Batman: Endgame proposed an even more eccentric origin, implying that the Joker is a supernatural near-immortal who, like Stephen King's Pennywise in It, turns up throughout Gotham's grim history.

We've all crossed paths with his type many times. The greater fear is becoming him.

Some things stick, some don't.

"Whatever is embraced by fans and readers is what accumulates as canon," Lee says.

In 1989, Tim Burton's Batman created yet another new identity for the character, with Jack Nicholson playing mid-level gangster Jack Napier, the triggerman who murdered the Waynes during a mugging. There's no Red Hood, but the movie retains the notion that being mutilated in a chemical bath drove Napier to madness. From there, the cautious Napier becomes a wild man. He indulges. He takes what he wants. He destroys anyone in the way.

"That makes Jack Nicholson's Joker one of the stronger versions we have available," says University of California, Los Angeles clinical psychologist Andrea Letamendi, who explores the psychology behind superhero storytelling on the Arkham Sessions podcast. "This is his true nature, and he's found a way to express himself and actualize those inner feelings of chaos and destruction. He's enjoying his life so much."

The Joker's brazen lack of remorse is one source for the disturbing combination of attraction and repulsion that he inspires in us. "We don't feel safe around this person," Letamendi says. "Our natural inclination is to be fearful and avoid him. But that freedom and sense of enjoyment of his experience lures us in."

Call it toxic charisma. From Cesar Romero's amused, alliteration-spouting antagonist on the campy 1960s TV series to Mark Hamill's dastardly and dashing 1990s version on Batman: The Animated Series, one of the unifying Joker traits is magnetism.

"This is why Jared Leto fell flat for us," Letamendi says of the so-called Juggalo Joker from 2016's Suicide Squad. "The edginess went so far, but he didn't have the charm or appeal. He was supposed to be tatted up and cool, but that's different than genuine charm."

The Joker's flexibility has made him a nearly infinite resource for DC. "He can manifest himself in various forms because he's a modern-day boogeyman," Lee says. "He's beguiling in his own way because he's so over-the-top."

The company is so confident in the Joker's mainstream appeal that, in addition to the new film, it released three comic-book titles about him in October, each featuring a different mythology. Two of them — Kami Garcia's Joker/Harley: Criminal Sanity, and John Carpenter and Anthony Burch's The Joker: Year of the Villain — dropped on the same day, October 9, while Jeff Lemire's Joker: Killer Smile hit three weeks later.

Asked why he thinks the Joker provides such rich material for storytellers, Phoenix points to the malevolence in the clown's eyes.

"When you don't have a definitive, clear backstory, it allows us to project our ideas on it. And that engages us. The character forces us to examine ourselves and our behavior."

The actor grins, wide and sinister. "Also, son of a bitch — he just looks cool."

In that reading, the Joker remains fascinating not because he's aberrant but because he's a funhouse mirror. We've all crossed paths with his type many times. The greater fear is not becoming his victim but becoming him. In all his forms, the Joker is someone who has lost his humanity. He feels nothing except selfishness. He can only rid himself of hurt by inflicting it on others. We recognize the mercilessness. We know the narcissism. We sense the misery tearing him to pieces from within.

We could almost feel sorry for the Joker, if only he weren't laughing at us. ■

KEITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ATIBA JEFFERSON**

HAUEN

Man in His Domain

BY **YASI SALEK**

NEARLY TWO DECADES AFTER LAUNCHING HUF FROM A MODEST STOREFRONT IN SAN FRANCISCO, THE ACCIDENTAL TASTEMAKER IS USHERING HIS EMPIRE INTO A NEW ERA OF SKATING AND STYLE

It wasn't Keith Hufnagel's idea to name his clothing brand after himself. Anne Freeman, his wife at the time, suggested it when they started the company back in 2002, even pushed for it. Hufnagel had been using his nickname, Huf, on his pro-model skateboard decks for some time, and his sponsors put it on Tshirts. He'd built a personal brand around the name already; it was only a matter of transferring it to his new venture. He felt sort of insecure about it, but he did it anyway. Although they later divorced, Freeman remained involved with the company until 2013, and the name she helped mint remains to this day.

"If you look out in the world, there are tons of brands with people's names on them, and you may not even know who they are. Like, do you know who Louis Vuitton is?" Hufnagel asks me.

I do not, in fact, know who Louis Vuitton is or was, despite owning at least one of his purses, so I get Hufnagel's point. You build a brand, time passes, and you as a person become just one helix in its DNA. Or at least that's the goal. I do know who Keith Hufnagel is, however, and so do a lot of other people — mostly skateboarders and skateboarding fans but streetwear devotees too.

When I first interviewed Hufnagel, back in 2005, HUF was a small clothing line with just two stores in San Francisco, some very limited-edition sneaker collaborations and a lot of buzz. Almost 15 years later, we're at HUF headquarters in downtown L.A., talking in his office, which is filled with clothing patterns and art pieces, including a giant pigeon sculpture by artist-skater and HUF collaborator Todd Francis. Hufnagel is wearing black twill HUF work pants, a white HUF-logo pocket T-shirt and Adidas shell toes.

This is where Hufnagel spends most days. On the floor, leaning against the wall is a large poster for the footwear company Lakai featuring a grinning blond boy carrying a tiny skateboard. "Keenan did some modeling," Hufnagel tells me. His six-year-old son with his current wife, Mariellen, was named after Keenan Milton, a professional skateboarder who passed away in 2001. He was Hufnagel's contemporary and best friend. About a year after Milton's death, Hufnagel started HUF. He was 28 at the time.

• • •

Keith Hufnagel was born in New York City in 1974 to a nurse and a computer technician. He grew up in Stuyvesant Town–Peter Cooper Village, an 80-acre post–World War II residential development bound by First Avenue to the west, 23rd Street to the north and 14th Street to the south. "Everyone in the neighborhood was skateboarding," he tells me. "This group of kids used to hang out at Midtown Plaza, and they would skate in those little dead-end streets. We'd all ride, and I learned how to ollie. Then, for my 13th birthday, I got a real professional-style skateboard."

From that day on, Hufnagel never stopped skateboarding. "It was a passion, or it was an addiction, whatever you want to call it," he says. "It was my path." Skateboarding was an entry point into a new community, into new geography. "The whole thing is social, because you're meeting people and staying connected with them and going to skate their areas. I met Chris Keeffe in my area and then went out to Woodside, Queens and skated his area. Then I met Jon Buscemi and Gino Iannucci and went out to Long Island and hung with them. And then there's Mike Hernandez in the Bronx and Ryan Hickey in Brooklyn, and all of a sudden New York is no longer this small little city."

New York in the early 1990s is a time of myth. Hufnagel's scene included skaters who would become big names, such as Iannucci and Hickey, but also Brian Donnelly, the artist now known as KAWS, and filmmaker Harmony Korine, who immortalized the world of Hufnagel's high school years with his screenplay for the 1995 film Kids, which featured other members of the scene: Justin Pierce, Leo Fitzpatrick and, most famously, Chloë Sevigny.

In 1992 Hufnagel packed up and moved to San Francisco, ostensibly to attend college but more to pursue skateboarding. "I saw California as the mecca for skateboarding," he says, "and at that time San Francisco had the biggest scene. It was where all the footage was coming from."

If New York is where Hufnagel found his passion, San Francisco is where he made that passion a profession. He turned pro halfway through his freshman year, joining a company called Fun Skateboards. He was skating all the time and traveling to film in Europe and Japan. Soon he had to make a choice. He chose his passion. He dropped out of school and kept skateboarding.

I ask him what "going pro" entails. "First you have to understand there are no actual rules in skateboarding," he says. "If someone says you're pro, you're pro, which means your name goes on a skateboard and you get paid a royalty. You basically become your own brand." When Fun Skateboards folded in 1994, Hufnagel was picked up by Real. For the next eight years, he built his brand. He moved to L.A., then back to San Francisco, kept traveling the world, kept living his dream.

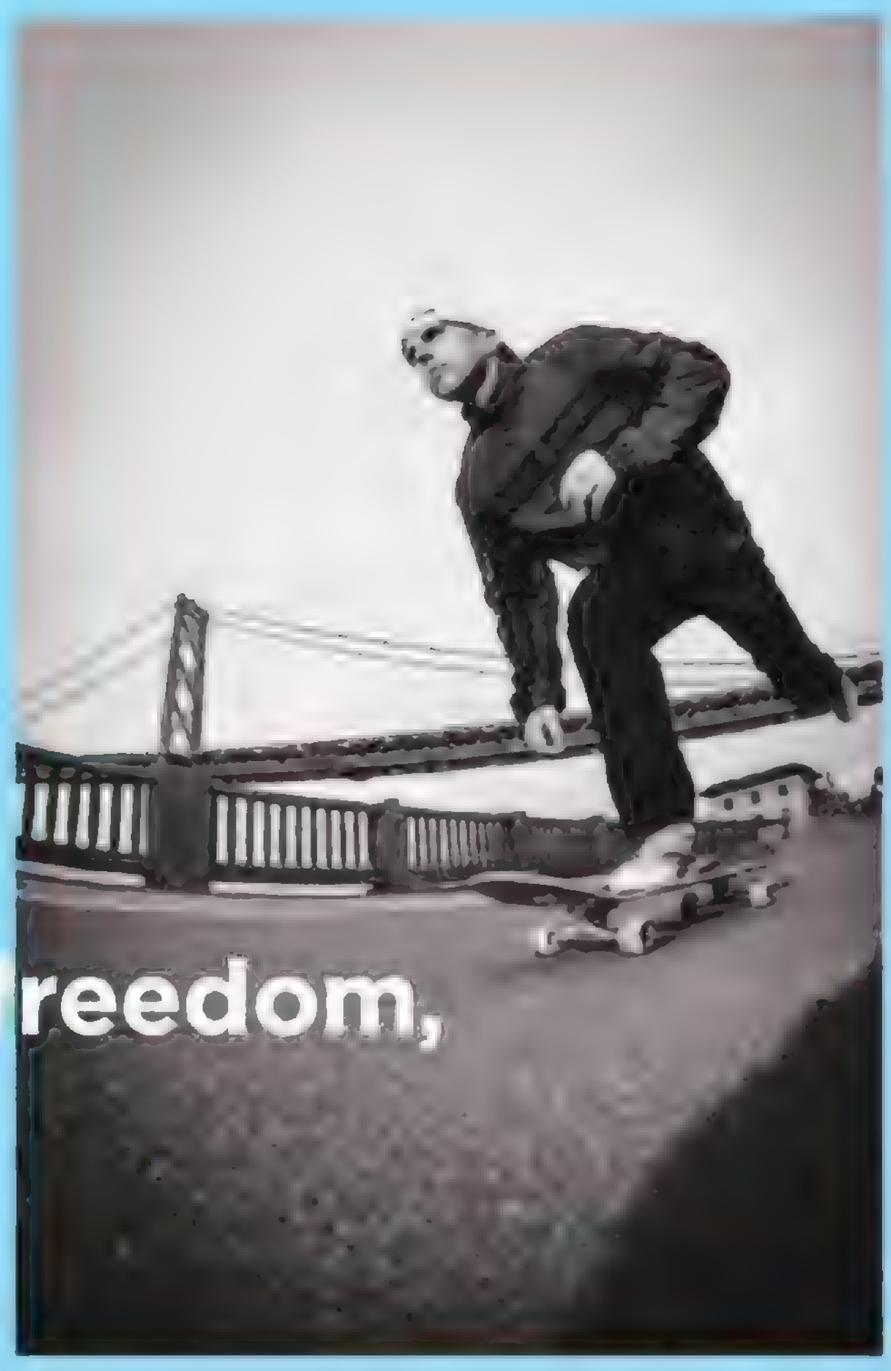
• • •

Historically, skateboarding has been a sport fundamentally about pleasure. Skateboarding is about freedom, adrenaline, creativity. Art has always played a crucial role: Most skate decks have boundary-pushing graphics designed by fringe and underground artists. Music too: Ask people from a certain generation how they discovered their favorite bands, and a common answer will be that they found them through skate videos. A lot of skateboarders became artists, musicians or filmmakers. Skateboarding is a social organizer: You skate with your friends and hang out with other skaters. Skateboarding is a party. "You can go to a place, drink beer, skate all night," Hufnagel says. "You can drink and smoke till four or five in the morning, pass out, wake up at four in the afternoon and do the same thing. Something I always thought about is, How am I gonna keep the party going?" It was this question that planted the seed for HUF.

"When you go 10 years deep into skateboarding, you realize at some point that you can't do this forever," Hufnagel says. "I can skateboard forever, but I can't travel the world and be at a professional level forever." He pauses. "I think you just want change too."

And so Hufnagel began to think about change. In his travels he'd been exposed to the street culture in Japan and Europe. Sneaker collecting was becoming a big deal the world over. And Hufnagel was into all of it — the sneakers, the street art and, most of all, the clothing. He wore pieces from Supreme, Japanese brand Mad Hectic and Stüssy, which sponsored him. Off the board he wore limited- edition Nike Air Maxes. "People were just trading and finding out where things were," he says. "This culture was really brewing."

He wouldn't say it himself, but Huf nagel has always been



Skateboarding is about freedom, adrenaline, creativity.

defined by his style. He stood out as a skateboarder because of his powerful, fast and graceful physicality. To a lesser extent, he was known for his aesthetics. "He just dressed kind of fresh," former HUF creative director Hanni El Khatib says. "When people think of him as a skateboarder, they definitely think of his style." Hufnagel was so into clothing that in the late 1990s he did a six-month stint at the Fashion Institute of Technology, taking classes in design and pattern making.

And so HUF was born in a narrow side room in Hufnagel's apartment in San Francisco. At the time, Hufnagel was at the height of his skateboarding career, still riding for Real and landing ollies higher than heaven. He and Freeman opened the first HUF store on Sutter Street as a sort of marketplace for all the things he'd discovered and coveted on his travels. They mainly carried sneakers, and because of Hufnagel's connections they often had the rarest limited-edition Nikes. They also offered clothing from Supreme, P.A.M., Stüssy and Mad Hectic, as well as skate decks and KAWS figurines. And from day one, they made their own T-shirts, with big HUF logos on them.

T-shirts led to an entire line of clothing that was immediately popular with industry tastemakers. But it was their Plantlife socks — athletic socks with an all-over pot-leaf print, designed by El Khatib — that reached a broader audience. They were created half jokingly as a conversation starter to get girls at parties. (Hufnagel doesn't really smoke weed.) But they took off after members of the rap group Odd Future, who frequented the brand's first L.A. store, started wearing them; the socks became one of the best-selling items in HUF history.

Artist collaborations were an early and enduring part of the brand. Barry McGee, Cleon Peterson, Chloé Kovska and other artists have all done their first clothing designs with HUF. I ask Kovska what HUF offered that interested her. "The freedom to breathe," she replies. "They didn't have a problem with risqué imagery, weed or nudity. I could just be myself with them. Nothing was a bad idea."

HUF's aesthetic crystallized early on. Ultimately, it's rooted in the founder himself: his history, his tastes, his reputation — and his undying love of skateboarding. HUF is not a core skate brand, but it's not purely a streetwear brand either. Skateboarding anchors it. Hufnagel wants HUF to have a skate team no matter what. He wants skaters to wear HUF clothes. "Our roots come from skateboarding, so we're always going to support skateboarding, one way or another," he says. "We're going to have a team, we're going to do tours, we're going to put people in the clothes, we're going to embrace who they are and help them excel in skateboarding."

• • •

In the past 17 years, HUF has gone from a company with a few Tshirt designs to a globally recognized streetwear brand. There are 13 HUF stores, and the company's signature wares are carried in 59 countries. After a 2018 womenswear soft launch, there are plans to widely release the line to reflect the significant presence of women in the sport. Although HUF's growth has included several sets of outside investors (it's currently majority owned by Japanese company TSI Holdings, which is also the parent company of Lakai), Hufnagel has stayed on in varying capacities the entire time. His current title is chief creative officer, and he goes to the office every day.

With the sport of skateboarding changing so much in the past two decades, has Hufnagel ever struggled to stay true to his roots? No, he says, because he doesn't think the skateboarding mind-set ever truly changed. "We don't care what people think," he says. "We're gonna do this because we love it. It creates a culture. The kids involved in it are fresh; they're creating new fashion styles. Kids who are skateboarders are walking down runways for Louis Vuitton. That's pretty fucking amazing."

At first I thought Hufnagel's main motivation was to protect his legacy — the Louis Vuitton–ification of his name. But by all accounts, he has little ego. The more I talk to him, the clearer it becomes that what really keeps him showing up day after day is something else entirely. It's to protect, to be the caretaker of the skateboarding ethos. He doesn't view this as an obligation but as a privilege. Skateboarding gave him friends; it gave him a career, the opportunity to travel, a purpose, a name. "Now I'm in the business of apparel and watching skateboarders grow," he says. "I've continued the same path, but I've just changed positions. I never had to leave skateboarding."

At the age of 45, Hufnagel may not be drinking beers till four A.M. or landing huge tricks, but he's definitely still at the party. He still skateboards every day. "I'm not throwing myself down stairs, but I still have fun going out and just basically skating three blocks and getting a coffee," he says. Is it still as much fun as it was when he was a teenager? He nods. "It's freedom. Freedom to roll fast, to get around easy. I mean, you can grab a fucking Bird scooter and do that, but you may not look that cool." ■

TAHLIA PARIS

@TAHLIAPARIS

Photography by **JONATHAN CASTELLANOS JCSMOOTH PHOTOGRAPHY @_JCSMOOTH.COM_**

Promo Director **@JEFFBLACK_THE_PROMOTER**

Powered by **@ENTERTAINMENTWORLDHD**

Outfit **@PLAYTHINGSMIAMI**

Tell us something surprising about you?
Something surprising about me is that I'm actually pretty shy until you get to know me.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
I was super excited to shoot for Playboy. I love the brand and I have since I was really young.

What inspires you?
I've always been inspired by body positive girls. The 'non typical' model.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
I chose to pursue a career in modeling because it's something I've always kinda' done and I love it so I stuck with it.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?
Someone I look up to in the modeling industry would be Kardashian /Jenner family. Although I know it sounds cheesy they have built an empire around modeling and have done much more with it as well.

What are some of your hobbies?
Some of my hobbies are ho yoga and hikinh.

Name three things on your bucket list?
Three things on my bucket list are 1; travel to Europe 2; live anywhere else in the world rather than California for at least 6 months 3; start a business from the ground up.

Turn-ons
Turn ons are ear biting, neck kissing, tattoos.

Describe to us your perfect date.
The perfect date would be dinner and movies in at one of our houses. I'm a home body.

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
A world capital i would like to visit would be Rabat because my grandfather was born in morocco Africa.

What is your mantra?
My mantra is to do to others as you wish they will do to you. So, treat others the way you want to be treated and it will always come back to you or back to them for treating you poorly.

THE PLAYBOY
SYMPOSIUM

BY **MATT MCGORRY**

Growing up, I didn't think much about my gender and the effect it had on my life. How things have changed: As I sit here writing this just after turning 33, I'm able to look back and see the many ways who I am has been shaped by what was expected of me, as a boy and then as a man. A lifetime of striving to fit into society's expectations of manhood had stripped me of so much of my humanity that I couldn't even recognize it at the time. I signed a bad contract. And now I'm lighting that shit on fire.

Until five years ago, I'd never read the fine print of this contract. I signed it, like most of us do, without considering the negative impact of everything deemed "just the way things are." Unfortunately, people following patterns they see as the norm have been the cause of many of the world's greatest injustices. Going with the flow can grant us power and social standing, but at what cost to ourselves and others?

It didn't take long for me to realize that having 17.5-inch arms and an almost 600-pound dead lift caused people to look at me in a way that made me feel powerful — not just physically but socially as well. In a culture that teaches men to be dominant, I found myself building a body and a persona that would demand respect by being "better" than others. I did this often at the expense of my humanity and integrity. For all the time many of us men spend trying to be "good enough" or "better than," when was the last time we saw a man apply the same effort to becoming more honest and compassionate? At the root of these extraordinary human qualities is the ability to be vulnerable, a quality too often seen as weak and "unmanly," something most of us are taught to avoid at all costs. Going against the grain can be costly, but not nearly as costly as slowly bludgeoning our own humanity into submission.

We all know the rules in the bold-type section of the male contract. I, like many of you, had learned them so well that they just felt natural. Being respectful of women doesn't necessarily give us the same social power as hooking up as often as possible and then feeling the affirmation of the head nods we get when telling other guys about it. Like most boys, I was taught we should get as far as girls would let us. I was taught our worth depended on our ability to deliver. Not knowing about sex, not being confident about it and not wanting it were never options. And so, in making our sexual relationships a determinant of our social value, we learned to dehumanize women to fulfill what was expected of us. Many of us lied to our friends about getting to third base, boasted about whom we'd hooked up with and never actually asked for permission to go further. We didn't ask because we didn't want to be seen as unsure, or perhaps because we didn't know or didn't care how hard it is for most women to have to say no. Our expectations of women and our own drive to "conquer" led us to give them the culturally recognizable labels of "tease" and "prude" when they didn't do what we wanted. And then we would shame them by calling them "sluts" and "hos" for doing the same things boys and men did — things that made us "players" and "pimps."

Once I began to recognize the double standards of sexism, I entered the fight for gender equity, thinking I was doing it for women. I soon realized I was doing it for myself and other men. The roles we're expected to play based on our gender are damaging to everyone. Patriarchy is a social system of male domination that harms women and those who identify as gender nonconforming. But it also hurts men: It forces our allegiance to a system that will never allow us to be truly free, that insists we remain dominant and in control. The contract requires that we cut off and numb integral parts of ourselves so we're incapable of fully knowing and expressing our emotions, or of being whole. How can we have integrity and be true to our values if we're expected to uphold our end of this oppressive bargain?

I've succeeded in many of the ways men in our culture are taught to aspire to. I've had success in my career as an actor, earning fame and a decent paycheck. I was a nationally ranked powerlifter. And yet I was left with profound insecurity and a sense of emptiness. How could it be any other way when my selfworth relied on having to prove myself over and over again?

Mutual liberation was the antidote to my despair. I wholeheartedly believe that when we're our best selves, we fight for what is right even when we know we'll get pushback. Courage and integrity require this of us. I have gone through a reorientation of my heart and soul, and I know that the work of growing to understand myself better, and to effect positive change, will never be complete. Reclaiming my humanity is dependent on resisting societal pressures that tell me to conform to the status quo, that tell me to be silent about injustice and to normalize oppression, hate and even my own deep-seated biases.

Take a moment to picture the "all-American man." If you're like most people, you visualize someone who looks like me: a straight, white, cisgender man with a "strong build." Over time, I learned how this default image had impacted my life and given me false confidence in my ability to be objective. If, while growing up, I never had to think much about what it meant to be a man, I certainly didn't think much about what it meant to be white. When we're in the dominant group, we rarely have to examine how our identities impact our survival, the way LGBTQ people, women, people of color, poor people and disabled people do.

In order for us to stand a chance at claiming our full humanity and embodying an expansive and inclusive worldview, we must be willing to go out of our way. We've grown up in a culture that teaches us to devalue the perspectives of the most marginalized. I did this for most of my life without even realizing it. But if we're ever to create a world where everyone is truly valued, safe and free, we must learn to listen to the voices from the farthest margins. We must assume the same, if not higher, levels of competency and objectivity in those who don't fit the image of the "all-American man."

It is my honor to bring in four leaders whose voices, perspectives and brilliance need to be heard. By listening, with open hearts and open minds, we will grow to better understand others, the world we live in and, ultimately, ourselves.

In the words of one of my sheroes, Angela Davis, "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept."

Matt McGorry is an activist and actor known for roles on Orange Is the New Black and How to Get Away With Murder.

A FAT BLACK POLITICS OF DESIRE

BY **SONYA RENEE TAYLOR**

When the Australian reporter called to ask me my thoughts on the article and photos in PLAYBOY featuring pop singer Lizzo, I promptly put the journalist on hold and googled the pics. I love Lizzo, but the thought of perusing a PLAYBOY magazine had not occurred to me since 1991, when I "found" a decade's worth of old issues stacked in my uncle's dresser drawers like bars of gold. Snooping through his things when he lived in our basement was a regular activity of mine, particularly because he had so much porn. Thumbing through those pages, I learned everything and nothing about my own sexuality, my own desirability.

Desire, according to my uncle's magazines, was blonde, cleanshaven, thin and white. Desire was red lips and a pouting mouth, and desire appeared to always be posing suggestively… with fruit. Uncle had other magazines. They were explicit and crass: black girls with pendulous breasts squirting milk or sprawling spreadeagle with their fingers rambling through thick black pubic hair. Every running joke I'd ever heard about PLAYBOY seemed to focus on how people read it "for the articles," an allusion to the supposedly more sophisticated palate the magazine was said to cater to. Erudite people read PLABYOY.

The fat black woman's body has always been a marvel—even when the world found it grotesque, it found it spectacular.

Those tasteful people (read: men) didn't want smut; they wanted beauty and class. They wanted thin, white, clean-shaven visions of desire. If the women in PLAYBOY were classy and beautiful, by default the women in the other magazines, the women with skin and hair like mine, must be smut. Dark girls were carnal but not desired. They were indeed objects of lust but not of beauty. If what I deduced about desire and beauty from these magazines was true, then what would I, could I, be as a sexual being in this body?

The fat black woman's body has always been a marvel — even when the world found it grotesque, it found it spectacular. When Sarah "Saartjie" Baartman was abducted and enslaved by European colonizers to be exhibited naked in a cage beside a baby rhinoceros, it was the epic swell of her butt and thighs, her pronounced labia and deep brown complexion that induced white folks to pay their money to gawk at her. This is what fat black girls like me came to expect for our bodies. I knew men might watch my ass sway beneath a sundress when I walked to the corner store in July. Men would spit their hunger toward me, spectators graciously detailing the myriad ways they would consume this prey set in motion before them. Of course it was my duty to appreciate that someone might want to devour me, that someone might want this undesirable body.

Not until I saw myself reflected in the brilliant tapestry of other black women — women I desired — did I begin to see desire and beauty as possible in my own being. But those women were not in magazine spreads. They were in kitchens in Oakland and Baltimore. I met them in mediation circles and at marches. Black women pouring into the streets to protest the murders of unarmed black bodies — it was in these sacred spaces that I saw how we are lovers and healers, desired and wholly beautiful. It was black women who told me I was a being of magnificence and sumptuous delight, and it wasn't until I began believing them that I was truly liberated into the fullness of a sexuality formed of my own definitions. Lizzo is gorgeous in her spread, but she is we — fat black girls have always been worthy of desire and respect, and we never needed a magazine to tell us that.

Sonya Renee Taylor is founder of the Body Is Not an Apology movement and author of The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love.

ON NONTOXIC MASCULINITY

BY **RICHIE RESEDA**

By the time most of us are 12, we've punched someone for pride, lied about sex for cool cred and called another boy "gay" for not being "man enough." This is what toxic masculinity teaches us — that we're measured by our physical prowess, by how much money we make and how many womxn we "have." (Womxn is a spelling many feminists use instead of women, to recognize the independence of womxn from men.) But what do we do when we're ready to ditch these chains?

Consent doesn't start in the bedroom — it starts with the first glance. Feeling attracted to someone doesn't entitle me to stare, linger or look them up and down. Contrary to what music videos and middle school taught me, it's not sexy — it's creepy. Just like it's not okay to express sexuality with my body to people who aren't down, it's not okay to express it with my face either.

The same goes for my mouth. Toxic masculinity dictates that I verbally express sexualized appraisal at all times, that these are "compliments." But they're not. Rather than assume people want to talk at all, I've found it's best to ask for permission and start with regular conversation. "Hi, can I talk to you?" works great. And if they say no, well, that means no.

I sometimes struggle with the idea that my manhood, and therefore my value, doesn't originate in my wallet. I drive a 1992 Acura Integra that looks like it once decorated a telephone pole. It gets me where I need to go without problems, but I feel embarrassed.

The toxic devil on my shoulder tells me that I should be in a Model S, that driving a more expensive car would make me bigger, more powerful, more "manly." To escape this mythology, I remember that I'm not valued by what I make but by what I give. Driving a sensible car gives me the freedom to support friends and family financially when need be, and to donate to causes I believe in. This reminds me that my purpose is to help, not to ball out.

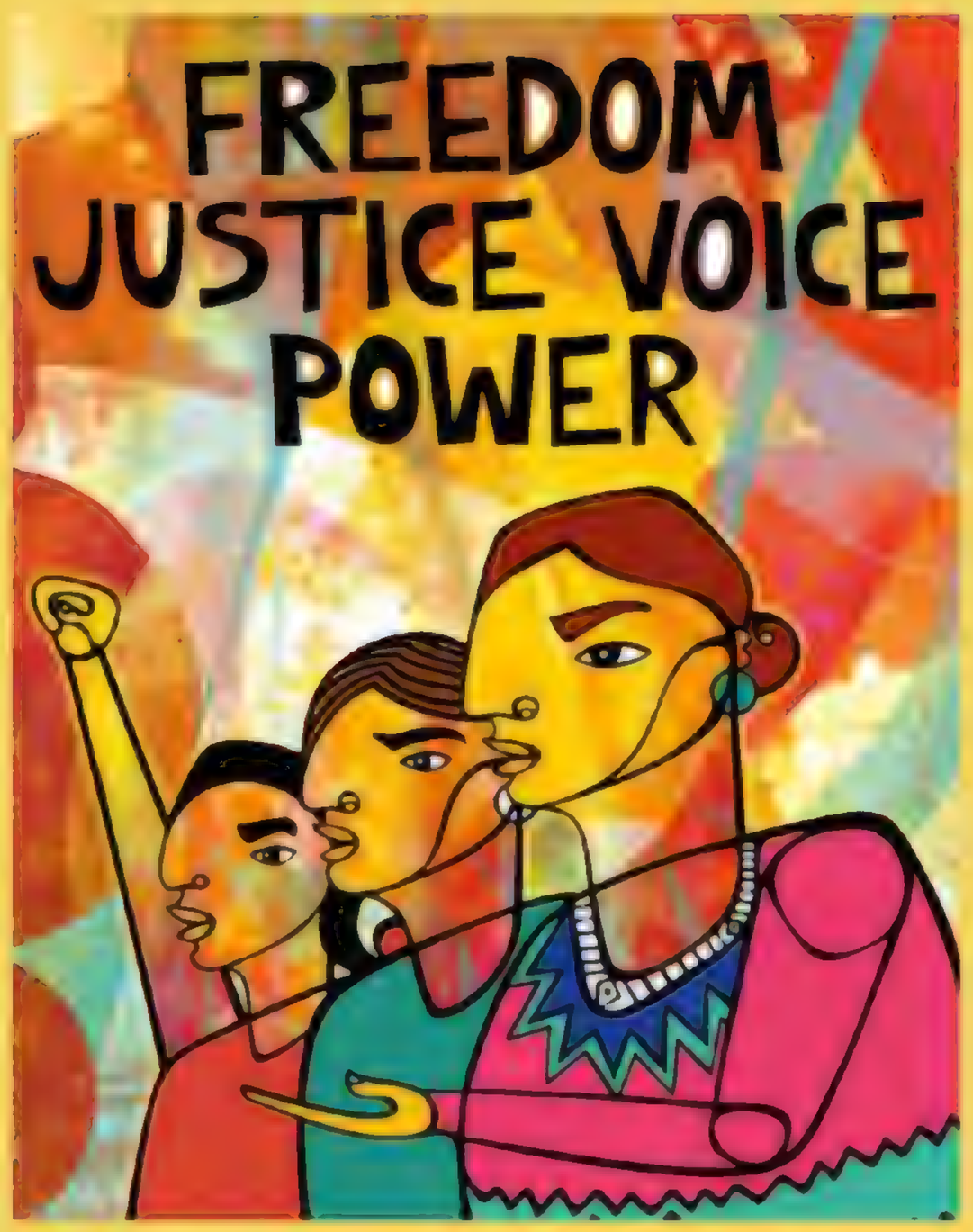
Getting man points for physically dominating others with athleticism or violence is another tough one to shake. It's insidious, because I know choosing not to play this domination game can get me hurt, or at least ridiculed with insults that liken me to "weak" people like womxn and queer folks.

Combating this takes courage, dedication and tolerance for discomfort. When someone "disrespects" me or the people I'm with, I must have the confidence to resist the urge to bark back, get revenge or "come out on top." I instead seek resolution and prioritize safety. This doesn't guarantee I'll be safe, but neither does violence.

Today, this is revolutionary — to pursue solutions instead of domination. But it's vital. Violence escalates when I fight fire with fire rather than with water. Fighting with water doesn't mean allowing myself to be victimized; it means the opposite. The nontoxic way to deal with conflict is to solve problems rather than to "prove myself."

This is why toxic masculinity is easy. It means going with the flow and being cool with it when the river cascades off a mountain. Nontoxic masculinity is hard. It means swimming upstream…but it beats falling off a cliff.

Richie Reseda is a formerly incarcerated feminist, organizer and producer of Indigo Mateo's 2019 album, Intuition.



ON PRIVILEGE AND FREEDOM

BY **MUNROE BERGDORF**

We are living in a time of social recalibration. Our understanding of oppressive structures has never been as widely acknowledged, discussed or deconstructed within the mainstream as it is today. The language we use for this is expanding, thanks to decades of thought put to paper, largely by womxn, people of color and the LGBTQ community, about what it means to be seen as "less than" by those who hold social power.

Discussions surrounding race, gender identity, sexual orientation and other factors have helped us identify which crosssections of society are most likely to be placed at a social disadvantage. These conversations have benefited greatly from the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading American scholar of critical race theory who coined the term *intersectionality* in the late 1980s; today, intersectional feminism recognizes the political and social disparities that impact our identities. The experience of an upper-class, white, cisgender, heterosexual woman will differ from that of a working-class, black, transgender, queer woman. And in understanding that difference in experience, we can understand and pinpoint systems of oppression such as racism, transphobia and sexism in a more nuanced way.

It wasn't until I discovered Crenshaw's work that I felt truly close to feminism — I found so much of the feminist theory I had been exposed to either dismissive of womxn who hadn't been assigned female at birth, or focused primarily on the needs and experiences of Western white womxn. I craved a branch of feminism that took into consideration the fact that womxn don't come in one form. We all have different stories, different struggles and different lessons to teach one another, so it's vital that the womxn's liberation movement reflect that.

Intersectional feminism allows us to see who holds power within society through the lens of privilege — a word often used in discussions of social justice today. Privilege is the recognition that some of us are afforded a head start by virtue of our identity. Privilege doesn't mean your life has been easy; it just means it would have been harder had you also been born X. It's important to recognize that privilege isn't fixed, just as our identities aren't fixed — we change as human beings throughout our lives, and so may our social privilege.

With all this language being adopted into the mainstream consciousness, it's important to note that this expanded terminology isn't necessarily new. It originated largely from conversations that have been going on within marginalized communities for a long time. The fact that you may not have heard them until now is due largely to the historic lack of diverse voices within the mainstream, and limited discussion of racism and prejudice in a real, nuanced way from the perspective of those who experience them. Terms such as *mansplaining, cultural appropriation, white guilt, hetero normativity* and *cisgender* help us disestablish certain behaviors and identities as "normal," thus allowing those who are marginalized not to be seen as "other." Being straight and cisgender may be common, but common isn't the same as normal. There's power in the language we choose, and there's freedom in our willingness to understand how it affects others who don't have what we have.

It would have been hard to imagine even 10 years ago the conversations we're now having about our different experiences in society. Maybe we got too comfortable within the boundaries of our privilege, or numb within our oppression. But if we've learned anything since the start of the #MeToo movement, it's that we must never be complacent, because those who would wind back our freedom of choice, expression and identity are anything but. We must stay active, we must stay vocal, we must stay informed. In the quest for equality, we must be conscious of what we're striving to be equal with and certain that we don't repeat the oppressive behavior of some privileged communities. Freedom must come from reconfiguring society in a way that's inclusive and not reliant on the exploitation, suppression or ostracism of any societal cross-sections. Freedom has to be a consistent and sustainable goal — freedom for all, not just power for some.

Munroe Bergdorf is a London-based activist and model.

SOME OF THE MEN ARE VICTIMS. SOME OF THE MEN ARE HARM DOERS

BY **DARNELL L. MOORE**

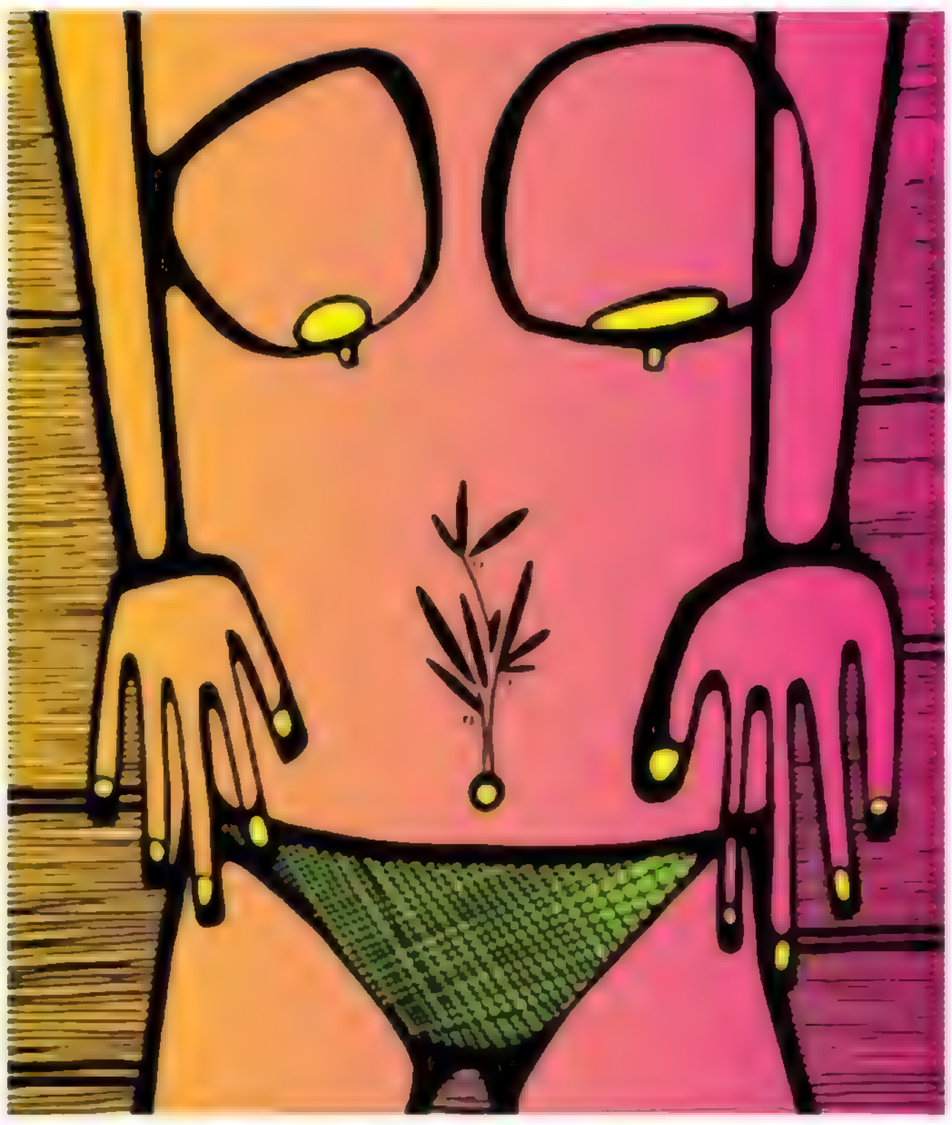
I returned to my friend's house to let him know I'd made a decision to move on. What we'd shared had complicated our bond — especially the best parts we'd hidden and feared others would discover.

We were two men in our mid-20s who were not yet free. We were broken and often demonstrated our love by breaking each other with ease. I knew as much and had readied myself to leave the man who had been, at times, my best friend, my brother, my confidant, my colleague, my sex partner, my secret, my nightmare and my only desire.

I sat opposite him on the couch in his bedroom. I didn't sit on the bed, because positioning myself too close to him, in the very spot where we'd broken the rules that real men are taught to follow, would have signaled an invitation to return to where we once were.

His eyes were fixed on me. My eyes were locked onto my hands. His words were precise — there would be no ending to the friendship whose very beginning was complicated because of our secret. I knew I needed to leave, however.

And then he grabbed and pulled and held and pushed me down and resisted my resistance and took off my clothes. I pulled away and removed his hands and clenched my lips and resisted his insistence until I finally stopped and froze and lay there while he broke the rule that real men are taught is okay to break.



Seven years we shared a friendship, and that is how it ended. It would take another seven years after that ending before I was able to put a name to what had transpired.

I wanted to be wrong. I wanted to believe that love was enough, that our long history of sexual intimacy was enough and that the realities of our complicated friendship were enough to reconsider that what had occurred was rape.

I did not want to believe I was a victim; I am a man. And before I was a man, I was a boy who was forced to have sex with an older female relative who tried to convince me that my body was not mine. And real men can't be victims because real men fight back.

No real man would allow his body to be pillaged. But I didn't fight back because I was in shock. I loved my friend. Real men take; they're never taken. I'd had sex many times throughout my life not realizing that fact.

Men are taught to ignore every "no" offered because our "yes" is the final word. And even now, as I reckon with the confusion left from that moment, I'm clear that I was taught the same lesson.

An intimate's "yes" is an invitation. Like so many men, I was not taught to be welcomed into another's space. I was not explicitly told that I needed permission to touch the body of another. I was not encouraged to take the time to ask about another's desire. But I know that if I'm to land on the other side of violence and in a place where my humanity is left intact, I have to refuse all the lies about manhood that I've been taught are true. I have to move beyond all I've learned and aim to be a better lover, a better intimate, a better human — for the sake of others and myself.

And I must not forget that intimacy, in its various forms, can be a safe horizon to which we men ascend if we aren't led to believe we're at our best when we leave behind the broken pieces of those with whom we engage. The consequence of our respect — of others' bodies, of others' needs, of others' spirits — is wholeness.

Darnell L. Moore is head of U.S. strategy and programs at Breakthrough, a human rights organization, and author of No Ashes in the Fire: Coming of Age Black & Free in America.

PLAYBOY'S party jokes

TAKEOVER TIME! THIS BATCH COMES TO YOU VIA *THE LATE LATE SHOW* HEAD WRITER **IAN KARMEL** AND A FEW FIERCELY FUNNY FRIENDS

SEX with me is like a trip to Epcot Center: It sucks.—*I.K.*

I'M not saying men are desperate, but I once said "I love the band Elton John" on a date, and the man still slept with me. —*Marcia Belsky*

I don't think of a man as an ally until he hands me his unlocked cell phone and walks out of the room.—*Bri Pruett*

THE year is 2055. An elderly husband and wife are reading in bed. The wife turns to the husband and says, "Kyle, I want you to fuck me like you fucked me on our wedding night."

The husband puts his book down. "Honey, I'd love to," he says, "but I simply don't have $80,000 worth of student debt for you to absorb anymore."—*I.K.*

THREESOMES *sound* like a great idea, but so does a boxing league of kangaroos.—*Amy Silverberg*

POLYAMORY is a lot like a graduate program: full of vegan parents scheduling things.—*B.P.*

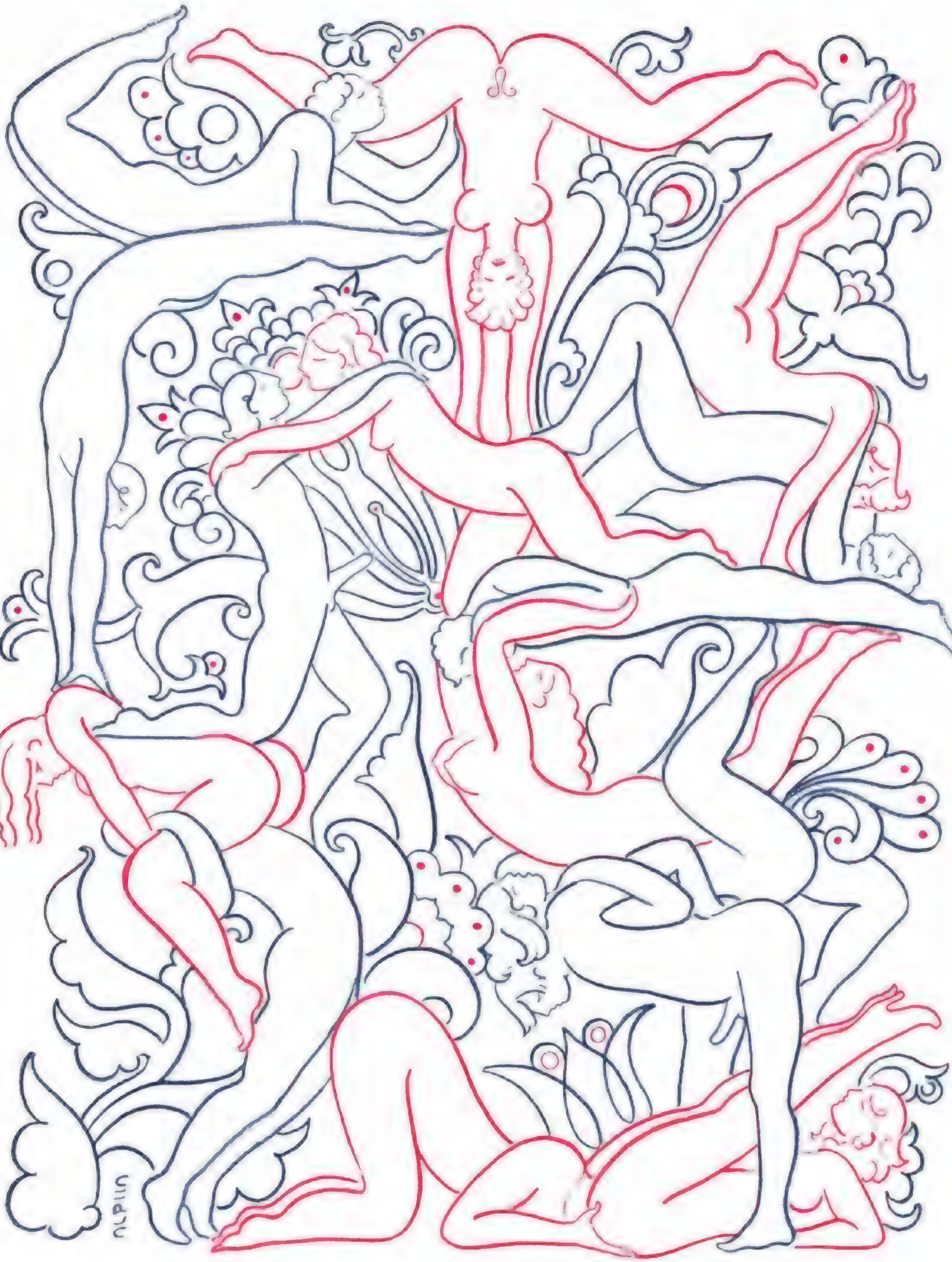
A taco salad is the perfect food for making people think you're eating healthy: *Salad* is right there in the name, but it's actually just the biggest possible taco.—*I.K.*

I once dated a girl whose dog Rufus would watch us having sex. Then I found and destroyed his webcam, and that was that.—*I.K.*

HAVING sex in your 30s is like being a urologist: Mostly you're just telling men their dicks are fine.—*B.P.*

A girl once told me she wanted to fuck like we were in a porno, so I arranged for my dad to marry her.—*I.K.*

OUR Unabashed Dictionary now includes the following variations on the term *sexting*....
Flexting: Sexy texting at the gym.
Brexting: Sexy texting while legally separating from the European Union.
Tex-mexting: Sexy texting with Bobby Flay.
BDSMS: Sexy texting while wearing a latex hood, and also your 4G went out.—*I.K.*



ARTWORKS BY **ALPHACHANNELING**

PLAYBOY
ADVISOR

Dr. Chris Donaghue — certified sex therapist, director of clinical education for the Sexual Health Alliance and host of Loveline — takes on the role of Playboy Advisor and weighs in on readers' questions about oral sex, orgasm-less sex, amateur sex, sweaty sex, forbidden sex, interracial sex and more

Q: *love cunnilingus. I can go down on a woman for hours. My favorite sex position is using my tongue to make a woman come while getting myself off. And the woman almost always comes! This means I rarely have penetrative sex, as I am just fine coming without it. A woman I recently started dating tells me it's strange that masturbation gets me off better than her vagina. Should I be worried that I, a straight man, am not that into vaginal sex?—B.K*

A: The first thing to note is that her vagina is still getting you off. Rest assured that there's nothing "strange" about preferring masturbation over penetration, because there is no "correct" way to have sex. The goal of sex isn't penetration; it's achieving mutual pleasure. You deserve to feel confident and authentic in whatever helps you do that.

Further, your heterosexuality should not inform anything about your sex life other than the gender of your sexual partner (though even that is fluid nowadays). Being straight does not predetermine one's favored sex positions, nor should it restrict them. Your heterosexuality also isn't an excuse for anyone to shame you.

Yes, calling someone's sexual preferences "strange" amounts to a form of shaming, which can quickly turn abusive. Your concern should be about other nontraditional interests your girlfriend might pass judgment on. When we reveal our sexual interests to a lover, the response should be one of acceptance — as long as those interests are mindful of your partner's pleasure and cause no harm to others. Which is why I must ask: Is your partner dissatisfied with receiving only oral sex? Has she asked you to do more than go down on her? Have you refused? If so, it's your duty to incorporate more penetration so both your desires are being fulfilled. This doesn't mean giving up what you like. Introducing a vibrator, for example, leaves one hand free for masturbation while still giving your tongue access to her clitoris.

If she has expressed that oral sex alone satisfies her, you need to tell her how her words make you feel (i.e., inadequate). Our self-worth is an accumulation of how others treat us, but you are responsible for your self-esteem. Human interactions, especially sex, are never neutral. You will always leave a sexual encounter either feeling better about yourself, your body and sex in general — or feeling bad about it all. Choose the former.

Q: *Why has adultery become so prevalent? I've witnessed three of my friends cheating — separately, though all three did it publicly and in front of me. I'm close with their partners, so their infidelities have complicated our friendships. This has made me quite cynical about dating and relationships. Overall, I don't know how to handle what I've seen. Do I call them out, tell their partners or shut my mouth and toss out my moral compass?—M.F.,*

A: Simple answer: Adultery is prevalent because monogamy is hard. According to data collected by the General Social Survey from 2010 to 2016, as many as one in five men have cheated on their spouses. Comparatively, 13 percent of women have cheated on their spouses. Those figures increase as people get older, however, suggesting that monogamy becomes more difficult with age. Meanwhile, the definition of cheating continues to evolve. According to the 2019 Playboy Sex Survey, 17 percent of female respondents did not consider sexual intercourse "a form of cheating."

The core issue driving people to cheat is not just the tension between desiring commitment and wanting the freedom to explore but also the toxic rules that govern many monogamous relationships. Toxic monogamy is the idea that you have a right to own or control your partner. This includes viewing others of the same gender as threats and not respecting your partner's privacy. (How many readers have broken into their lovers' cell phones?) Such behavior sucks the joy and sustainability out of any relationship.

Cheating is an unacceptable solution for whatever issues your friends may be trying to solve (or run from). It robs a relationship of trust, which is difficult to get back. Most of us could benefit from being honest with our partners about our needs, and that includes a desire to have sex with others while in an exclusive relationship. Deciding to do so without telling a partner is nothing short of destructive.

But let's switch back to you, the innocent bystander. I suggest speaking to each of your cheating friends individually so you can better understand their relationships. Not everyone has the same rules, and it's increasingly common for couples to enter monogamy with different expectations and dynamics. Some couples are fully open, some allow for

Orgasms are hot and fun, but they aren't guaranteed, nor should they be required. The goal isn't mutual orgasm but mutual pleasure. By expanding our definition of what we call "sex," we can create new sexual connections and new kinks.

casual make-outs and drunk flirting, and the majority are traditional and closed. Might all three of your friends be in open relationships? It's unlikely — only one in 10 people ages 25 to 34 are — but…perhaps.

While it is not your job to fix anyone's relationship (or destroy it), you should confront your friends about how they've put you in an unfair position. In the end, being a moral friend doesn't make you the moral police. If they turn on you or respond with anger, you have no reason to stay faithful to them — something they should know a thing or two about.

Q: *My husband and I have been married for 14 years. We enjoy a physically intense sex life that includes verbal degradation and sex that leaves us both bruised. We've never taken it to the point where either of us feels unsafe; only once have my bruises been large enough that I've had to cover them. I recently started bingeing HBO's Big Little Lies, and on the show, Nicole Kidman and Alexander Skarsgård's characters engage in similar sexual behavior — though the balance of power in their sex life seems less equitable. The Kidman character's therapist says she may be addicted to the pain. I never thought such a thing was possible. Is it? Could my husband and I be addicted to pain during sex? — D.B.,*

A: You shouldn't retroactively pathologize 14 years of a healthy sex life because of a fictitious plotline on a soapy TV show. For one, you cannot be "addicted" to pain. You can seek pain, enjoy it and prefer sex with it, but you cannot be addicted to it.

Our culture likes to dramatize extreme interests by deeming them "addictions." Diverse and subversive sexual acts create anxiety among sex-phobic social puritans. Understand that the purpose of a phrase like *sex addiction*, which the American Psychiatric Association rejects, is to diagnose someone's sex life as abnormal. There's nothing psychologically wrong with intensely — or even painfully — experiencing your sexuality, as long as it's safe, consensual and with someone you trust. I work with many patients who strive to heighten their arousal, expand their sex lives and find true compatibility. You and your husband seem to have achieved all that — to which I say congratulations.

Q: *I'm a white man who has dated only chunky women of color. No one has ever commented on the similarities between my exes, but today's climate has made me hyper-aware of body shaming, misogyny and racism. Is it possible I have some underlying, unhealthy attraction to women of a particular race and body type that I'm not fully aware of?—A.P.,*

A: If I were to read your question a different way, it may sound as though you're covertly asking whether you, a white man, should sleep only with thin white women. The answer to that is an obvious no.

It's refreshing how aware you are that your sexuality can impact others in ways you may not fully realize. To me, this speaks to your compassion. Having compassion for people who come from different backgrounds is a goal of intersectionality. Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and defined as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups," intersectionality aims to increase awareness of the power imbalances in all areas of life. That includes our sex lives.

Fetishization is the process of reducing a person to certain physical attributes and ignoring everything else about them. Thus, fetishizing larger women or women of color is indeed a problem. But I don't believe you exhibit this fetish, as your relationships with these women have all gone beyond sex. They're not sex objects; they're your partners.

It's important to be conscious of how you use your privilege and social power, but there's no politically correct form of sexual desire. Don't overthink what turns you on, and don't resist what arouses you because of identity politics. In the U.S., healthy interracial relationships have long represented two people pushing back against societal inequality. As long as you treat the women in your life like the gorgeous, intelligent, autonomous sexual beings they are, you have nothing to be concerned about.

Q: *My sister's boyfriend recently relocated from Chicago, where they were living together, to Boston, where I live, for work. As a straight woman, I find him immensely attractive and have had many sex dreams about him throughout their relationship. Now that we live in the same city, he constantly texts me to hang out. I don't trust myself around him and have gone to great lengths to avoid contact. My sister wants to know why I won't help her boyfriend settle in. It's actually causing me a lot of stress. What do I do?—K.H.,*

A: Why do you think you wouldn't be able to control your impulses if the two of you were to spend time together? I suspect you're harboring some hope of a future in which you two end up together. Sorry, but he isn't interested in having sex with you. He just wants to spend time with someone he knows in an unfamiliar city.

Your anxiety is par for the course in cases of unrequited love, but don't lose yourself in a world of what-ifs. Boston is home to many single men you could date. Don't waste your time obsessing over your sister's boyfriend, who is unavailable, as if he's your only option. He isn't.

In the meantime, make this man — a person your sister loves deeply — feel at home without becoming a home-wrecker. There are many easy ways to make this work. Socialize in public or do group activities. Don't spend time alone with each other, and don't get intoxicated together. Avoiding him isn't sustainable; should they wed, you'll be running from him till death do they part.

Q: *I'm a virgin, but I want to start having sex soon. How am I supposed to know which condom is right for me? I'm average length but thick in girth. I'm also uncircumcised. I don't want a condom to ruin the mood when it finally happens.—J.G.,*

A: Condom selection, like everything else tied to sex, is trial and error. Determining your condom size is not only important for your (and his/her) pleasure but integral to effective birth control, STI prevention and a healthy sex life. Sizing charts can be found online, but beware: The charts aren't standard across manufacturers. Condoms are also made from different materials, such as latex, polyisoprene and polyurethane. Some feature studs, ribbing and prelubricant. Some are colored, others are flavored. All of this is to say finding the right condom goes beyond fit.

Start by investing in a few brands and various styles. Many brands come in packs of one to three and can be purchased online. Try one on and wear it while masturbating to kick-start your body into linking protection with arousal. Your first time will be awkward for a lot of unforeseeable reasons, but I can assure you that the person you take to bed will be impressed you came prepared. Oh, and asking your bedfellow to put the condom on you turns a potentially awkward moment into foreplay.

Q: *I play in a rugby league, which requires me to wear a cup. My girlfriend loves it. When I come home from a match, she tears off my uniform and asks me to fuck her while wearing my sweaty jockstrap. But pulling the cloth pouch to the side is distracting, and I can't stay hard. This has left us both frustrated by our spontaneous postgame sex sessions because neither of us finishes. What's behind my girlfriend's fetish for my dirty jockstrap, and how can I fulfill her fantasy even when my body isn't responding?—R.T.,*

A: First off, congrats on having an assertive, sexually empowered girlfriend. A confident partner who *demands* sex? You're luckier than you may realize. Second, your question is a perfect example of how sex helps us grow and mature, because what you view as problems — an inability to stay hard, an inability to climax—are opportunities to remind you what makes sex so great.

To start, nothing is wrong with your body. Orgasms are hot and fun, but they aren't guaranteed, nor should they be required for sex between two people to feel complete. Sex is supposed to be fun, and you don't need to finish to have fun. Fulfill her fantasy by fucking her while wearing the jockstrap. If you go soft, start using your tongue or your fingers, or bring in a toy. Put the jockstrap on her face, switch up positions, ask her to ride you or have her go down on you to bring back your erection.

The goal here isn't mutual orgasm but mutual pleasure. By expanding our definition of what we call "sex," we can create new sexual connections and new kinks.

By the way, the science behind fetishes is a theoretical guessing game, as fetishes represent a complex intersection of brain activity, cultural conditioning and personal experience. Don't sweat about what's behind a fetish (as long as it's not the identity-based variety I mentioned earlier). Just enjoy what comes next — even if you don't. ■

NANNETTE HAMMOND

MIKE PRADA @PRADOFOTO
TAYLOR JAZZ // KENDRASBOUTIQUE
@NANNETTEHAMMOND
ANDREA PRINCE @MISSANDREAPRINCE

As an International model and a 2018 Playmate of the Year, I travel the globe frequently. This allows me to visit exotic places and meet many new people. Male fans and beautiful places keep me motivated.

Tell us something surprising about you?
People may be surprised that I change my own oil in my pink convertible.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
I absolutely love to work with Playboy. Most of my social media fans come from Playboy.

What inspires you?
I am inspired by social media influencers that relate and connect with their fans.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?
After a video of me went viral, Playboy reached out to me and my modeling career started.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?
I look up to many models in the industry that share positive content daily.

What are some of your hobbies?
My favorite hobbies include driving fast cars, be creative, changing my look frequently, and entertaining friends/family.

Name three things on your bucket list?
A trip to Africa, a TV reality show, racing sports cars are all on my bucket list.

Turn-ons
Strong, powerful men with good hygiene turn me on. And, men that pamper and appreciate me.

Turn-offs
Rude, cocky men with bad hygiene turn me off. And, negative people.

Describe to us your perfect date
My perfect date would be at a beautiful setting with a respectful, kind man followed by a rough tussle in the bedroom.

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
Over the years, I've romanticized about walks along the Seine in Paris.

What is your mantra?
One of my favorites mantras is simply: Be YOU! If others don't like that, F them (tough)!

ON THIN ICE

A social-media-fueled tourism boom saved Iceland from economic ruin. A decade later, is it leading the country to environmental collapse?

BY **CIARA O'ROURKE**

Selfie sticks punch the sky as three women bob through the milky-blue water. They look like knights charging against a strong wind, but they're young and they're American and they persevere. Their hair is piled high on their heads, and they purse their lips as they gaze up at their iPhones. Behind them, a man takes photo after photo of his partner as she swans in small circles. She reviews the shots with a severe expression as he shields the screen from the sun.

When their images post to Instagram, they will all appear to be alone in this otherworldly watering hole, the Blue Lagoon, situated about 45 minutes outside Reykjavik, Iceland's capital. In real life, they're surrounded by tourists from countries such as Pakistan, Algeria and Poland, all similarly posing in the steamy, geothermal seawater or making their way to the bar, where the first glass of sparkling wine is on the house.

The Blue Lagoon warns its patrons that it's important to stay hydrated while wading in the 100-degree, silica-heavy pool. Flowing on one side of the lagoon is a metal fountain etched with the words PURE ICELANDIC WATER to signal where visitors can fill their cups for free. If this seems like a marketing ploy to make local water sexy, it's working. One woman's eyes go wide as she tells me how great the tap water tastes in Iceland, better than back home. The country's tourism board playfully rebranded tap water as *Kranavatn*, a word that literally translates to "tap water."

Good marketing is behind Iceland's tourism boom. The country's seemingly pristine landscapes abound on social-media screens and draw more than 2 million visitors to its shores each year to hike behind thundering waterfalls or to see up close the canyon where Justin Bieber shot his "I'll Show You" music video. Some land at Keflavik International Airport — the main entry point for foreign travelers — because they're seeking something more ancient than the Colosseum in Rome, less defiled than Tulum. Others are here because they've seen Iceland's remote vistas on Facebook or on *Game of Thrones*, which often filmed here. But as the number of tourists has spiked, with yearly visitors outnumbering permanent residents sixfold, traditional systems have broken down. Locals know not to venture onto a glacier in sandals and to stay on designated paths when hiking. Visitors, in their attempts to get photos that don't feature other gawking tourists, traipse farther and farther off the trail, destroying plant life. Tourists pluck the words SEND NUDES in moss that will take decades to regrow.

The culprits in that very real crime against a hillside are unknown, but you can picture them. News reports have warned about a crisis in the country, one that's overwhelming everything from hotels to national parks. Iceland's environment is fragile, and it's being threatened by too many travelers. But tourism helped yank the country out of an earlier crisis, buoying the economy after the debilitating collapse of 2008. And here I am, ready to experience a country whose rapidly expanding popularity may be permanently damaging what lured me here in the first place.

• • •

I'm seated next to a man named Jason on my flight from Paris to Reykjavik in late June, and I tell him my plans for the next five days: Drive to a town near the Sólheimajökull glacier, which I'll climb with a tour group recommended on Trip Advisor, then drive to Reykjavik and visit the Blue Lagoon and the Golden Circle, a popular tourist route.

Normally I avoid talking to anyone on planes, but I notice Jason's driver's license is from Washington state, which leads us to discover that we graduated from the same college in the same year. The coincidence does not feel so impressive when I recount the number of people I know who've visited Iceland in the past few years — nearly two dozen. One of my favorite stories: A woman was in a coffee shop in Reykjavik when she asked the person sitting next to her to scoot over. In a country with only about 350,000 residents, perhaps it's also not so remarkable that the woman was Björk.

Tourism has played a vital role in helping Iceland recover from the 2008 economic crash, says Sigríður Dögg Guðmundsdóttir, a spokesperson for Visit Iceland and

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CHANTAL ANDERSON**

Some residents feel Iceland has become a cartoon of itself.

Left: Situated on the south coast, Reynisfjara is one of Iceland's most visited black-sand beaches. Acclaimed for its beauty, the beach is also notoriously dangerous due to the water's strong undertow.

a sort of hype-woman for the country. The industry has grown rapidly, from fewer than 500,000 visitors in 2010 to 2.2 million in 2018. The country used to be a landing pad for planes to refuel before heading on to Europe or North America. But Icelandair and, before it collapsed in March, WOW Air, offered stopover deals that helped secure Iceland as a travel destination.

In some ways that growth has been a boon, Guðmundsdóttir says. Restaurants and other services have opened in rural areas, where residents now have entrepreneurial opportunities that didn't exist before the tourism explosion.

"People are able to move back into the towns and villages they grew up in because they can create jobs for themselves," she says. Höfn, a town of barely 2,000 where Guðmundsdóttir used to live, now supports a large grocery store and three restaurants — amenities that locals alone couldn't sustain.

But the influx of tourists has also strained infrastructure, she says, especially at the most-trafficked sites, including the Golden Circle. The canyon from Bieber's music video, which has almost half a billion views on YouTube, closed temporarily after Beliebers from across the globe overran it, destroying delicate vegetation. Another hiking spot, Reykjadalur, also went dark after Iceland's environmental agency decided it had been endangered by tourists. A 2018 report from the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Innovation says beloved vistas including the Dverghamrar basalt columns and the Gullfoss waterfall are all at risk of damage.

Some of these sites were simply never meant to be popular. The country has an "Icelandic Pledge" that it encourages tourists to take, promising to travel responsibly, camp at campsites and so on. The tap water campaign aimed at tourists is a national effort to cut back on plastic bottles. At gas stations, Styrofoam and paper cups, ubiquitous in the United States, are hard to come by. If you want a coffee to go, you'll often need to bring your own mug or buy a reusable one.

Iceland chairs the Arctic Council and holds the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and one of its three focuses for the latter is sustainable tourism, including "decarbonization" of the industry. A member of the Paris Agreement, the country aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent of 1990 levels by 2030 and be carbon neutral by 2040. A 50 percent increase to its 2010 carbon tax went into effect last year. Iceland also wants to electrify its vehicle fleet. The impacts of climate change are already apparent, says Guðmundsdóttir. But, she adds, "there's a really strong will in Iceland to preserve nature and maintain tourism as a sustainable industry."

• • •

It's bright and cold when I land in Keflavik. It's summertime, so the sun won't set till around midnight. Driving on near-empty roads to my Airbnb near Hvolsvöllur, I pass purple Alaska lupines, an invasive plant species, blanketing the rolling, rocky hills. There are as many tour buses barreling down the Ring Road, the route that loops the country, as there are cars. Navigating through small towns I see hostels and buildings with Airbnb logos affixed to the windows.

The waterfall by my Airbnb, which you might know as #skogafoss, is majestic. Campers have set up tents near the base, and a woman is furiously adjusting her selfie stick in the spray while climbing the hundreds of steps to the top. As lambs gallop down the grass beside the stairs, the place feels peaceful, even private. I could see the waterfall from a nearby restaurant, which seems emblematic of how tourism affects rural towns — part of the cottage industry supporting the interlopers who are changing these communities.

It's still light when I fall asleep at the Airbnb. A chicken coop backs up to the guesthouse, but the rooster never crows. The next day, my host smiles gently as

Left: The Icelandic horse has lived on the island since the 10th century; today it's bred for sheepherding, competition and leisure riding. **Middle:** Vandalism to plant life has become a concern following increasing reports of intentional destruction. **Bottom:** Landmannalaugar, a popular hiking destination, is surrounded by mountains and obsidian lava fields.

she presents breakfast: bread made with barley from their farm, homemade dandelion and rhubarb jams, Angelica pesto and lamb paté. The eggs are from their chickens, the milk from their cows. Seated around the table are more people from the U.S., including women from California, Florida and Seattle and a man from New York City. He was in Europe for work but took advantage of the stopover and is visiting Iceland for about 48 hours.

Judy Butler is in Iceland because the airfare to Ireland from her home in Kittery, Maine was too expensive, plus a lot of her colleagues at the school where she teaches English have been here and liked it. Butler and I soon depart for the Sólheimajökull glacier. The trail leads us through an ash-covered icescape that our guide, a British man named Simon Rees, calls Mordor. The ash, left over from past volcanic eruptions, insulates the ice, forming dark peaks and valleys near the water's edge.

"First chance for photos for all you instagrammers," Rees says after a few minutes of walking. The actor who plays Jaime Lannister on *Game of Thrones* posted a selfie he took on Sólheimajökull, Rees says before encouraging us to ask him questions about glaciers. Or the TV show. I ask about the show. First he tells me he didn't like the ending. Then he points to a sign hammered into the earth that marks where the glacier reached back in 2010. According to Rees, it's one of the fastest disappearing in Europe.

"And I'll leave it up to you to decide why," he says, skirting any conversations about climate change. (Soon after my trip, the Copernicus Climate Change Service reports that July was the hottest month ever recorded on Earth.) In brief, he tells us, there's less snow in the winter and more melt in the summer. The same amount of ice has

disappeared in the past 10 years as in the past 100. Icebergs sticking out of the lagoon like meringue won't exist by the end of this summer, he says, and he notices more breaking off all the time. Later, he shows me a photo a friend of his took from the same spot in September 2018. There was a wall of ice. Now there's water. Tour guides will need to jump the stream, he says, and then build a bridge.

Above: Jökulsárlón is Iceland's most tourist-friendly glacial lagoon and, with a depth of 814 feet, also its deepest lake — a result of glacial retreat due to rising temperatures spurred by climate change.

"Eventually we won't be able to get here at all." Retreating glaciers can be increasingly hard to access, says Nathan Reigner, an Arctic Fulbright Scholar in Reykjavik, but the glacial melt is also creating new sites, like the Jökulsárlón glacier lagoon that formed when glaciers calved and melted along the south coast. As more of these sites have emerged, he says, there has been an "arms race" for who can develop tourism businesses to meet the skyrocketing demand. What one study early in the tourism boom called a "surprising lack of planning and control at the national level" led to a spate of visitors and tour companies that were ignorant of environmental sustainability guidelines.

Reigner is a recreation and tourism consultant with a background in park management, concentrating in part on crowding, capacity and conflict. At a coffee shop in downtown Reykjavik he gives me a primer on Icelandic tourism.

To wit: Tourists have been coming to Iceland since the 19th century. At first it was rich Europeans. By 2008, when the economy crashed, the country hosted about 500,000 visitors a year. The financial crisis's encore was the volcanic eruption that grounded flights on the continent for weeks.

But the krona, already a volatile currency, was down steeply against the dollar. It became cheap to venture here, and Visit Iceland, the country's official tourism arm, rallied to save the 2010 summer tourism season. It worked. By 2013, about 800,000 people were landing in the country each year; by 2017, more than 2.2 million.

As adventure-seekers visited Iceland and exposed their friends and family (or followers) to images of the country, those places became destinations. And Iceland didn't have the structures it needed to support the surge. A range of goods and services have followed the tourists to towns of all sizes. Even Reykjavik has more bars, Reigner says. Locals are

Above: At about 40,000 square miles, Iceland is roughly the same size as Kentucky. Outside the Ring Road, much sightseeing is done via hiking trails, which traverse the country across three national parks.

Below: Landmannalaugar ("People's Pools" in Icelandic) is dotted with hot springs and serves as the starting point of the 34-mile Laugavegur hiking trail.

happy their swimming pools are open later.

During the summer, on any given day, about one in five people on the island are tourists, Reigner says. But as the krona regains its value, visitors are staying for fewer days. That means their land travel is limited. It might be more appealing to stay on, say, the Golden Circle than spend a day driving to a more remote coastal village. This causes problems by concentrating the environmental footprint within a small area. Distributing tourists more evenly across the country can reduce the negative impacts. For example, Keflavik airport currently centers traffic in the country's southwest region, so in 2015 the government resolved to develop new flight routes to lesserknown airports, such as Akureyri in the northeast.

Icelanders are split on how much the tourism industry benefits their communities. Generally they're happy with it, but some feel priced out or crowded out, Reigner says. Others feel Iceland has become a cartoon of itself. The government developed a plan to collect reliable data to improve transportation, infrastructure and more. And, Reigner says, they've been largely successful. By looking at issues including freshwater, wastewater, nature sites and carbon footprints, the country seems to be tackling the conflicts that stem from tourism. Still, many Icelanders believe tourists "spoil" nature. I ask Reigner if he agrees. He leans back in his chair and thinks for a second.

"Intensive use," he says, "requires intensive management." He goes on to say that no "management machine" could have coped with the rapid growth of tourism in Iceland.

"It's not that people did a bad job," he says. "It's that the job is impossible."

When Reigner first visited Iceland, in 2015, he thought it was a playground. Now he thinks about it more holistically. He wishes he could help tourists connect more with the culture, a challenge on a weeklong or weekend trip. Being a tourist means going somewhere to find meaning for yourself, but in doing so you also change the meaning of a place.

Reykjavik surely feels changed, though compared with when, I don't know. The waiter at a downtown restaurant speaks English to me before I say anything. More Americans stumble in, and a Japanese man at the table next to mine demands the wi-fi password. Watching the people pass by outside, I wonder if any of them are from here.

• • •

By the time everyone has boarded the Arctic Adventures minibus for the Golden Circle tour that ferries tourists from Thingvellir National Park to the Geysir geothermal area to the Gullfoss waterfall, 12 of us are buckled in, plus our guide, Heimir. Nine are from the United States and five, including me, live in Texas. A couple from San Antonio tells me about a cave they visited that may be closed because tourists keep scrawling their names in the bacteria covering its walls. The guide showed them one such graffito from 2006 that's still visible today. Cori Clymer, who's here from Philadelphia to celebrate her 50th birthday with her mom, passes around a dried fish snack. Michelle Brinker, from Houston, takes my photo at the national park, a UNESCO world heritage site with a parking lot full of sightseeing buses. One tourist climbs over the rope installed to keep visitors away from a cliff. He wants a better photo.

One story Heimir tells us about tourists sits with me longer than the rest. It dates to the early 2000s, before the tourism boom. People hoping to see a UFO land on a glacier had descended on Reykjavik, renting cars and driving into the rural countryside. Many ran out of gas before they could find filling stations. Others showed up at overbooked hotels. The region wasn't equipped to host so many people at once, but farmers opened their doors and welcomed the ignorant travelers. That same hospitality is on show today among Airbnb hosts and restaurant servers who patiently wait while I fumble to find the correct amount of krona to pay for a meal. For my final dinner in Iceland I eat at Skál, in a food hall in Reykjavik. (An American suggested it.) Sitting at the bar, I order a skirt steak that another American, sitting nearby, recommended. After it's placed in front of me, the woman next to me nods and smiles. I feel as though I've finally earned a local's approval, but when she speaks, it's clear she's American.

"So good," she says. Then she pulls out her phone. ■

THOMAS MIDDLEDITCH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JULIAN BUCHAN**

AHEAD OF *SILICON VALLEY'S* FINAL SEASON, THE EMMYNOMINATED STAR OPENS UP ABOUT THE UNEXPECTEDFROM HIS DREAM ROLES TO SEXUAL EXPLORATION TO SHOOTING GUNS WITH ALEX JONES

BY
RYAN GAJEWSKI

Q1: *The real Silicon Valley has changed drastically since Silicon Valley debuted on HBO in 2014. Would it be a different show if it were starting now?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I really don't know, but I do wonder if this show has had anything to do with the consciousness of that. Season six will deal with privacy issues: Richard is pushing a new, decentralized internet where no one tracks or sells user data.

Q2: *The show has been nominated for a best comedy Emmy for the five preceding seasons but has never won. You've been nominated for best actor once. As you head into the final season, does it seem like Silicon Valley has always been HBO's bridesmaid?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I always figured the most I would get would be a nomination. Even if you've told yourself that this is all stupid, when you lose you're like, "I shouldn't be bummed, but I am quite sad about it." I'm sure HBO would rather have the show go on for a few more seasons, but our showrunners are like, "No, this is the story."

Q3: *With Silicon Valley, Veep and Game of Thrones each having their swan songs this year, is anyone at HBO thinking, Shit, we're losing all our great shows?*

MIDDLEDITCH: The TV landscape in general is figuring out how to compete in the new world of television. Players like Netflix have forced everyone to reinvent themselves. I don't think anyone is panicked — I mean, they're cleaning house with *Game of Thrones*, but HBO is a prestige network. In the end, a network has to have just one good thing that people watch in order to get awards.

Q4: *Having left Facebook and Twitter, you're presumably not a fan of Mark Zuckerberg or Jack Dorsey. Do you agree with Elizabeth Warren and other presidential hopefuls who want to break up Facebook, Amazon and other tech giants?*

MIDDLEDITCH: It's a great idea. And no, I'm not a huge fan of Zuckerberg and Dorsey, but I don't like to slight them either. Without selling user data, it's not a viable business. And I still have Instagram. Also, I was never really good at Twitter, to be honest.

Q5: *Do you have a fear of the unknown, post-Silicon Valley?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Of course I do. When something is successful, you're like, Okay, how do we figure out how to keep it going a little longer? There are 4 million shows; we're definitely not the biggest, but people watch us, which is nice. It's a challenge when you're involved in something to make the decision to end it. It's hard to shoot Old Yeller — not that we're Old Yeller, because that would imply we're a sick dog. It's more like crawling into your best friend's window and murdering them. It's hard to do that when you don't know what comes afterward. Even if everyone who's involved in the show is guaranteed work, will it be the same type of work?

Q6: *Has your role in this year's Godzilla: King of the Monsters changed your standing in Hollywood?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I think so. Unless you're ordained as an attractive teen, it's hard to get crazy fame right out of the gate. I would love to do big movies all the time or work with great filmmakers; I would love to star on Amazon's Lord of the Rings series and transform as the Riddler in a new Batman. I don't think about it analytically, though, because it makes you feel as though you've taken a bath in oil. I just try to do good work so that when I have early-onset Alzheimer's and I'm looking at my IMDb page and my wife tells me, "That's you," I can register that I did some cool shit.

Q7: *You and one of the Godzilla writers visited a swingers club with your partners during production. Are you and Mollie, your wife of four years, familiar with the swinging scene?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I don't know how much I can say, because I don't want my wife to be mad at me. Only after I got married was I like, "Mollie, I'm sorry, but we have to get nontraditional here." To her credit, instead of saying "Fuck you, I'm out," she was like, "Let's figure this out." To be honest, swinging has saved our marriage. We have different speeds, and we argue over it constantly, but it's better than feeling unheard and alone and that you have to scurry in the shadows. By the way, it's now called being "part of the lifestyle." The term *swinging* is old.

Q8: *Is being "part of the lifestyle" something you've always been interested in?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Absolutely not. I self-deprecatingly call myself a pervert, but that's not what it is. I just like it. I'm sexual. I'd always thought I was a romantic and that when I fall in love, that stuff fades away. It does for some years — enough to be like, "I should get married, and I'll be different." But it's part of me. If that's part of your being and it feels important to you, find a way to explore it, because repression sucks.

Q9: *Do you have any advice for couples who may be exploring that lifestyle?*

MIDDLEDITCH: For anything sexual — whether in terms of the sex act or identity or kink — you want to

know where the walls of the box are. Mollie and I have created our own rules, and compared to most of the people we've met who do this kind of shit, our rules are strict. We're not off on our own; we're together, a unit. It's a perpetual state of management and communication, to the point where it's like, "All right, we've got to stop. Chill." I'm gas, and she's brakes. This is actually the premise for a comedy series we're writing together.

Q10: *How do you identify?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Pretty vanilla, probably cis-hetero. Even if I've witnessed situations that may not be for me, I want to witness them anyway. I'm of the mentality "We're only here once." I don't believe in reincarnation or an afterlife, any of that shit. If I look around, I actually see a lot of shit that makes me sad about the world. This is a positive way of connecting with people and experiencing things on a very selfish level.

I've also been to some weird parties that were very *Eyes Wide Shut*, f rom which I w alked away t hinking, I d on't n eed it, but I'm glad I saw that. I've seen some dicks, I've seen some butts, I've seen some tits. It's weird — I've totally gotten to the point where I can see a dick and just be like, "Nice hog, buddy." [*laughs*] And it's not weird. "Man, I'm jealous. Good stuff." I'd like to have gone to the Playboy Mansion, just to have the knowledge. Myself and a lot of other people who start on this journey don't know where they're at in it. They're going, "I think I just need a thing to happen. All I know is, this particular situation is hard." I love my wife like I've never loved anyone before. With two people who feel that way about each other, how do you go down that road? It's tough. Bring a therapist along for the ride.

Q11: *Are you concerned that speaking about this publicly could inadvertently make you a face of the lifestyle?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I would be honored to be the face of something. I don't give a fuck, but my wife is more private, so I have to juggle that. I don't think I would ever be the face of a full-tilt, yourbody-is-my-body lifestyle. The perception is that you open up that door and it's Eyes Wide Shut, which i sn't necessarily the case. You can go to that party, of course. You pay the fee, you'll go. [*laughs*] My mantra is, How can I explore this with a 1960s, peace-and-love, full-understanding, everyone's-connected-andfeels-good kind of way? Not every corner is explored, but you have to be patient. I battle my own needs. Sometimes I'm a ravenous little monster, and how do I calm that down?

Q12: *Are you comfortable with your body?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I am, but I'm 37 now, and there are moments lately when I've been having body-image issues. Not many people talk about it being okay for a guy to want to feel sexy. Typically it's "Get fucking swole!" No, I want to look in the mirror and know that I have some semblance of a jaw line and feel confident. No one really talks about the fact that guys don't always feel that. It's okay for boys to want to feel pretty.

Q13: *You've said that you first had the experience of fans wanting to sleep with you as a Second City improv performer on cruise ships. Has that sort of attention increased?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Personally, that's one of the trickier elements of it all, because Mollie doesn't get that and yet she has to witness it. I'm like, "Come on, what about this chick who's obviously really into me?" And Mollie will say, "Yeah, she's into *you*. Where do I fit in?" That question comes up. There's a lot of negotiation, and adding fame sometimes makes it easier and sometimes complicates things.

That's the forever-changing landscape in our relationship, because it's about everybody feeling safe. The internet is a possibility for meeting people, but Instagram fucks up marriages. If your partner brings this very forward person from Instagram to you, you'll be like, "Do you guys have a thing?" Whereas if your partner bumps into someone and they start a conversation, it all happens in front of you. It's a game of inches on a minefield to try to predict who's going to feel safe. My first concern is Mollie. Anything that happens has to be run by the queen.

Q14: *You're a fan of The Bachelor and The Bachelorette. Explain that show's greatness to people who hate on it or who've never seen it.*

MIDDLEDITCH: The fun of it is thinking, What would I do? I always think about how utterly difficult it would be for me to survive in that house with all those alphas. Not that I'm not an alpha. I don't perceive myself as a beta or a submissive little bitch — or whatever the fuck betas are supposed to be. But who am I going to joke around with? Even though I know I'm funny and cool, would that person even look at me when compared to all the boneheads? My wife's like, "I think you'd fucking get voted off first," and I'm like, "Me too." [*laughs*]

Q15: *A 2018 Hollywood Reporter cover story featured the cast of Silicon Valley with the headline TRIUMPH OF THE BETA MALE, which led to a rant by Alex Jones about modern masculinity. How does it feel to piss off Jones?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Hilarious. I shot guns with him and my friend at this ranch in Texas maybe six years ago. This was before Infowars got big, and I didn't really know who he was. If I hadn't later learned that he constantly spews awful nonsense, I would have been like, "That guy was super nice." It made me think, Does he really believe all that shit? Because if he's really saying all that just to sell protein powder, he's a diabolical motherfucker. I'm so glad YouTube removed him. There should be more accountability. I don't want to censor everybody, but I want to fucking censor some.

Q16: *You were bullied growing up and have dealt with depression over the years. Is there still pain in that?*

MIDDLEDITCH: It's all part of the path. There were things that were painful, for sure, but I'd rather have that happen versus me being the aggressor. I was catching up with a hometown friend, and she said, "You were really mean to me when I was a kid." I was like, "I didn't even know — I'm so sorry. If only you knew I had a crush on you the whole time."

Q17: *How have success and fame changed the way you cope with those emotions?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Success has changed everything. Fame is something that guarantees change, even if I don't have Pirates of the Caribbean fame like Orlando Bloom. But there's no way to go through fame without it changing you. It's more about how you respond to it and how elastic you are — if you're able to go back to who you really are. Fame becomes dangerous only when you start believing the hype and believing you're a special person above the normal tier of people. And that's hard to avoid because of all the times you get to go to the front of the line. It's difficult not to think, Oh, I am totally special.

Q18: *How does fame affect friendships? You and your former co-star T.J. Miller were once close, right?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Everyone reacts differently to fame. It's a shame. T.J. is very funny. Whatever he's doing or whatever he wants to do, I wish him success. I'm not going to get into whatever happened. We just stopped seeing eye-to-eye. I'm not the only one he doesn't see eye-to-eye with.

Q19: *You're in Zombieland: Double Tap, out in October. Do you have the skills to survive a zombie apocalypse?*

MIDDLEDITCH: I'm an instrument-rated private pilot. I'd been wanting to fly since I was 14 or 15 years old, when I got into military history and aviation and PC flight simulators. So if you have a bunker in Montana, save me a bed. I'll get you there.

Q20: *Do you think the public knows the real you?*

MIDDLEDITCH: Look, I play a ton of video games, but there are other parts of me. There's going to hockey games and flying airplanes. There's a bit of a hippie in me, because I was raised in Nelson, British Columbia, a hippie town. As much as I enjoy spending an entire weekend playing computer games, I also like to take mushrooms and drink rainwater off a tree. It's all important. ■

THERE'S NO WAY TO GO THROUGH FAME WITHOUT IT CHANGING YOU.

LISA CANNON

Photography by **ARTHUR ST JOHN @ARTHURSTJOHN**
HMUA **KITTIE LOMBARDO @KITTIELOMBARDOARTISTRY**
Snake supplied by **BIRDS & BEASTS INC @BIRDMANLV**
Model **@LVAUSSIE**

What is your name? Where were you born? Where do you live now?
Lisa Cannon, Sydney, Australia currently living in Las Vegas, USA

Favorite style of music?
I really have a wide range of music taste, but I really do love the 80s Rock & pop! anything with a good sexy beat to Latin to top 40 I do enjoy relaxing to a sexy chilled beat while having a hot bath & candles on.

Favorite artist?
Foo Fighters. I have seen the band live 4 times. Lenny Kravitz was also amazing to watch live last year here in Vegas. I also can never get enough of INXS & U2.... my list is really endless

Favorite movie of all time?
Dirty Dancing! I basically stop whatever I'm doing when it comes on. The scene in the lake & the dance studio is extremely sexy.

Favorite actor?
Peter Dinklage & Emilia Clarke. Kiera Knightly is also adorable to watch.

Favorite color?
White. It's a fresh and clean look. Heather grey & Black. Black is very sexy, easy to dress up or be casual in.

Read the book or watch the movie?
I became a HUGE fan of Game Of Thrones! Especially after I just got back from Iceland beginning of this year.

Describe your perfect man.
Tall, dark & handsome of course! It is a very long list... Extremely intelligent, classy, yet also very sporty. Someone who can always make me laugh. Who doesnt love a good laugh! Old school gentleman traits never go out of style & I love hearing nerdy facts randomly. Adventurous (I am a huge traveller), foodie lover, committed & doesn't give up easily. An interest in surfing, golf, salsa, snowboarding/skiing, wake surfing a plus, but if he doesn't willing to learn. Most importantly, someone who has my back at the end of the day no matter what & when he wraps his strong arms around me, softly kisses my forehead, I melt & I know everything will be ok

Describe your perfect date.
Doing some sort of sporty activity/ adventure & enjoying delicious food while watching the sunset.

Favorite body part on you?
My smile & my heart. It has so much love to give. If you can make me smile & laugh a lot, you most likely won my heart!

Favorite body part on a man?
Shoulders, chest & back. I like to feel

protected & have them wrapped around me.

Any pet peeves?
Snoring is a big negative! A random text with just "hi" or 'wyd'.....
The Bed not made & not showering before sleeping. You wish to snuggle? please be clean & smell delicious.

Tell us something about you not too many people know.
I am very particular about how I sleep. So particular about it that I travel with my neck support pillow. Queen bed sharing is a no go (I am a bed hog to a tee & I admit it. I guess from being too flexible). As goofy as it seems, I love sleeping with a sleeping mask on.

Describe yourself using only 3 adjectives.
Unique, adventurous, understanding

If you can change any one thing about you, what would it be?
To be a little bit taller. I wish I was 5'8. My height is 5'7..

Do you like to travel? Where is your favorite vacation destination?
Absolutely YES! I have traveled for many years around the world. The world is a big beautiful place to explore. I always try to visit back home to Australia every year for the summer. Living in Vegas I miss the Aussie beaches extremely.

I am hoping to stay in one of those exotic water bungalows one day & visit Greece. Anything with an ocean I am there!

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
Competing with other models with a higher instagram following.

Congrats on your Playboy feature! What does this mean to you?
THANK YOU!! I am extremely excited about this! In 1yr I have had the honor to be featured in 3 big magazines. Maxim, FHM Australia & now Playboy! I hope this opens up more opportunities for me

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
Hopefully retired living by the beach in Sydney Australia or in Laguna California.

Any last words you would like to share with our readers?
Life is too short. See as much of the world as you can! I went sky diving with my Dad this year for my birthday. It was a thrill of a lifetime!

Huge Aussie hugs to you all!

HIGH

D

GIN

AMERICAN STORY
FINE-DINING CANNABIS
RESTAURANT IS SURE TO
LIGHT UP LOS ANGELES. BUT
WILL THE ACTIVISM THA
CHEF ANDREA DRUMMER
INFUSES INTO EVERY BITE
TRANSFORM THE INDUSTRY?

BY **MICHELLE**

"ADVOCACY AND CANNABIS—THEY GO HAND IN HAND."

Chef Andrea Drummer puts the final touches on a friedchicken sandwich while her sous-chef flits around the kitchen, popping ingredients into the fryer. "This brine is nice," Drummer says, taking a bite of a pickle. "But see this?" She pokes at the bread collapsing under the weight of coleslaw and the hunk of meat. "This should never happen." She turns to me and sighs. "This sandwich needs more work."

It's a scene like countless others in the tense, giddy lead-up to a restaurant's opening night — but the establishment in this case is Lowell Farms: A Cannabis Café, the first legal cannabis restaurant in the United States. "It's intimidating," the 47-year-old chef confesses.

In the stuffy kitchen of the under-construction site in West Hollywood, California, Drummer has been experimenting all week in preparation for the fall opening. Despite the pressure, she appears calm and focused as she stands by the stove in a dark denim apron, a red bandanna holding her hair and beaded bracelets decorating her wrists.

"There are a lot of eyes on me," Drummer says softly over the din of carpenters and kitchen fans. "I want to do right by everyone."

• • •

The restaurant, co-owned by cannabis cultivators Lowell Herb Co., marks a shift in an industry hoping to appeal to a market that includes college kids as well as their parents and grandparents — and an industry with a long history of racial tensions and high incarceration rates. Eleven states have legalized recreational marijuana use since 2012, and though the industry raked in a total of $10.4 billion in 2018 and is projected to be worth $32 billion globally by 2022, there's still plenty of room for social integration. And that's just what this fine-dining experience offers.

Residents of those 11 states may be open to cannabis consumption but turned off by the common perception of legal bud culture: going to a dispensary where young stoners present you with overpriced pre-rolls; returning home to sit in front of your television and giggle for no reason. But "we all eat," Drummer notes. "I think it's important to engage with cannabis the same way a person does when they go out for martinis." The Lowell café will not serve alcohol, so the restaurant will be a pioneering experiment in which cannabis is the main social lubricant — testing Drummer's theory that sharing a meal and getting high are both communal experiences that have the power to help people connect.

When the eatery opens this fall, cannabis sommeliers will tend to each dining party to suggest food and strain pairings based on individual preferences. Diners will then have the option of enjoying joints or vaporizers before and during their meal. "We're trying to focus on the idea that it's going to be approachable for many different people, so the entire place will have overgrown living walls — very aromatic, very lush," says restaurant director Kevin Brady, who goes on to praise Drummer's attention to detail and longtime contributions to the Lowell brand. "Andrea has been partnered with Lowell from the beginning, when we petitioned the city for a license [in 2016]," he says.

Drummer carefully considers how each strain pairs with a given dish. "I think of the cannabis as I would rosemary or mint — the flavor profile, the notes, if the strain is more pungent or more mild," she says. "It's very farm-to-table in every respect, with our food and with the bud." She goes on to explain how she'll create dishes to complement both the flavors and the psychoactive effects of whatever strain is "in season." Blue Dream, for example, pairs well with sweet and savory dishes alike due to its mild flavor and notes of blueberry. Drummer adds that the strain elicits an uplifting high that you might associate with dessert, so she's thinking about pairing it with cereal-milk ice cream sandwiches. She's also creating dishes with stronger flavors: "When you consume cannabis, your senses are heightened, so the food's flavor profile is very forward. It's not a muted palate."

Drummer views the Lowell café as her opportunity to elevate cannabis-food pairing into a culinary art — and to eventually bring cannabis-infused concoctions to the menu. The café had initially planned to serve Drummer's gourmet edibles, but current laws forced the company to pivot. "The state legislature is still formulating its policy around cannabis infusions. It's unclear, and we'd rather take the conservative approach," Brady says, noting that prepackaged edibles will be available for purchase. "We're still working to figure out what those next steps look like."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KANYA IWANA**

While the market for legal edibles — think gummies and brownies — has more than doubled since 2011, the products are extremely difficult to regulate. Dosages are unpredictable, and potential toxins have reportedly come up as a result of extraction technology. Meanwhile, the underground cannabis dinner events that continue to appear throughout the country come with problems of their own: A seat at the table can cost more than $100, and the addition of cannabis can feel like a profit-grubbing afterthought. Still, Drummer notes, compared with the combination of alcohol and food, "cannabis is kinder" if it's done right. When she cooks with cannabis, she often finds herself listening from the kitchen for a shift in tone once the effects hit her diners. "I hear the cadence go up in such a beautiful way," she says. "It's like a symphony."

But even Drummer had to be convinced of the powers of the bud. "I grew up in the South, where there are certain things you don't talk about, and that influenced the direction of my career initially," she says. Raised in a strict Baptist family in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, she was fascinated with food from an early age but thought everyone who indulged in cannabis was lazy. Ironically, she worked as a "very anti-cannabis" drug counselor from 1997 until 2005. It wasn't until she moved to California in late 2007 that her mind changed: Drummer found herself working for a weed-friendly attorney who proved that people who partake can be successful. When she later suffered from sciatica, the near-instant back relief cannabis offered meant she could pursue her passion as a professional chef. In 2009 she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Pasadena, and by 2012 she'd founded her cannabis dinner service, Elevation VIP Cooperative. "It liberated me," she says of her career pivot.

The Lowell Herb Co. team met Drummer at an event in 2016. The brand was impressed by Drummer's experience under celebrity chefs such as Thomas Keller of the French Laundry. Her work as an outspoken cannabis advocate sealed the deal. "Advocacy and cannabis — they go hand in hand," Drummer says. During our conversation over the hot (and getting hotter) stove, she points to the company's social-equity programs, such as last year's billboards in downtown Los Angeles that advertised jobs for nonviolent cannabis offenders.

"What was important to me was the team they assembled and how diverse it was," said Drummer at a UCLA "Being Black in Cannabis" panel in February, citing the company's hiring practices. "They didn't just offer me a job," she added. "They offered me a partnership."

• • •

Drummer's visibility as a black female chef matters. Since starting Elevation VIP she has worked her way to the top, including landing an appearance as a competitor on Netflix's cannabis cooking show Cooking on High in 2018. Her name has appeared on lists of America's top cannabis chefs, which is how her sous-chef, Rochelle Tyler, discovered her. "I was like, 'Oh, that's so cool, a black woman on the list,' " says Tyler, also a woman of color, who started working for Drummer after an introduction from a mutual friend. "She's always speaking up for people like us."

More than 80 percent of legal cannabis companies are under white ownership, while only about four percent are owned by black people. At the same time, cannabis arrests are rising in the U.S. On average, blacks are almost four times more likely to be arrested for cannabis than their white counterparts, despite roughly equal use. There is, however, a chance for cannabis legalization to be informed by social justice, if the people in power keep these disparities in mind. The House Judiciary Subcommittee

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRANT CORNETT

on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security held its first hearing in July 2019 to discuss social equity in the industry — an early step toward mending prohibition's damage and aiding communities disproportionately harmed by the drug war.

"If you're in this industry and blind to the fact that a great number of black and brown people are incarcerated for doing the very thing we have the freedom to earn a living from, I would say shame on you," Drummer says. The chef describes her vision of diversity-minded hiring practices: "I want to change the landscape of who we see in the industry. I would love for anyone who has been exonerated of a nonviolent cannabis crime to come and work in the kitchen."

• • •

It has been two hours since I arrived, and I'm starting to feel a little claustrophobic. But Drummer is still engrossed in food prep, now tinkering with the ice cream sandwiches. I pack up my things and make my way to the door, stopping to wish her luck. She grasps my hand and looks me in the eye. "I'm so scared," she says in a low voice. "It's a lot of pressure, but what's the alternative? Sitting around and not being able to change the narrative? Not being able to hire people to be a part of this industry? Not having learned anything?

She shakes her head. "So I'll take it," she says. "I'll do the work so someone else doesn't have to." ■

"IT'S A LOT OF PRESSURE, BUT WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?"

BRIDGET

Stavoy

@BRIDG_STAVOY

Photography by **MOSAAB ALSARAY ART @MOSAABALSARAYART**
PR **@LEO.ALDERMAN @LSAPUBLICATIONS**

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS
Bubbly, Playful, Clever.

WERE YOU EXCITED TO SHOOT FOR PLAYBOY?
Yes! It was such a beautiful day and I had fun doing it.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?
Seeing people do what makes them happy.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR BEST FEATURE?
My eyes / eyebrows.

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL SEXY?
A cute dress, heels and my favorite perfume.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO WOMEN ASPIRING TO GET INTO MODELING?
Find agents who want the best for you and listen to them. Focus on what you are doing. Don't get discouraged.

DO YOU FEEL MORE LIKE A CITY PERSON OR A COUNTRY PERSON?
I'm more like a beach girl- I was born and raised in Daytona Beach, Florida.

FAVOURITE SHOOT LOCATION?
Anywhere warm and by the water

A GUILTY PLEASURE?
Spending money on iced coffee's instead of making my own.

WHAT ARE YOU REALLY GOOD AT?
Problem solving, remaining calm in difficult situations.

WHAT IS ONE THING PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOU?
I am 100% Irish.

WHICH SONG IS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN TO MAKE YOU CRY WHENEVER YOU HEAR IT?
The House That Built Me by Miranda Lambert.

WHAT IS YOUR MANTRA?
Make the most of it all.

THE ULTIMATE MALE

FANTASY

FORTY YEARS AGO, SIX ICONS OF QUEER AMERICA TOOK CENTER STAGE AT THE WORLD'S HETERO MECCA

BY **GERRICK D. KENNEDY**

Inside the packed Great Hall of the Playboy Mansion, atop a stage washed in purple and yellow lights, six sex symbols shimmied and gyrated to a pulsing disco beat. Dressed in skintight costumes that left little to the imagination, they not only danced, they belted out tunes. But these seductive performers weren't Centerfolds — they were the Village People, and they had brought their act to the hottest home in America.

• • •

It was the fall of 1979, and disco had reached its climax. Gloria Gaynor had released the splendid empowerment anthem "I Will Survive" the previous year, and Rod Stewart had the world asking, "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" Donna Summer was on top of the charts. Diana Ross, Sister Sledge and Chic were churning out indelible slices of sparkling dance music. And the Village People were at the height of their stardom.

It made sense, then, that when Hugh Hefner decided to throw a roller-disco pajama party on the posh grounds of the Playboy Mansion, the Village People would be tapped as the night's musical guests.

Watching the bash, taped in October 1979 and aired the following month as an ABC prime-time special, feels like taking a madcap trip through a forgotten bit of Playboy history. Guests included a skate-happy James Caan, a tennis-playing Cheryl Tiegs and a smiling Patty Hearst.

Hosted by the dashing Richard Dawson, the event was billed as a "wild all-night party of music, laughter and roller disco." Naturally the camera gravitated toward the bevy of sun-kissed models that descended on the Mansion grounds during the first portion of the show, with long stretches of screen time dedicated to shots of scantily clad women dancing on skates or frolicking in the Grotto. Although the Village People were the main attraction, other entertainers also performed: Chuck Mangione was there to play the flugelhorn, and Wayland Flowers's rowdy puppet Madame delivered unmannerly zingers throughout the program. Video footage of Playmate photo shoots — nothing too revealing for the ABC presentation — was also incorporated into the show.

Jazz, jokes and feminine beauty — standard fare for PLAYBOY. ("When Hef throws a party, he really throws a party," Dawson says in one bit, paying more attention to the bikini-clad models than to the camera.)

But it is the Village People, grinding and slinking alongside Playmates as they perform two songs in the heart of hetero America, who steal the show. Considering the group was created foremost for men who found nirvana in gay clubs and certainly not in the world of Playboy, the irony almost astonishes.

• • •

At the Playboy Mansion, eroticism and escapism coalesced to create an exhilarating fantasy land. Disco music had the power to harness those same forces and achieve exactly the same thing. Hugh Hefner and the Village People didn't target identical audiences, but they both created and catered to male fantasies.

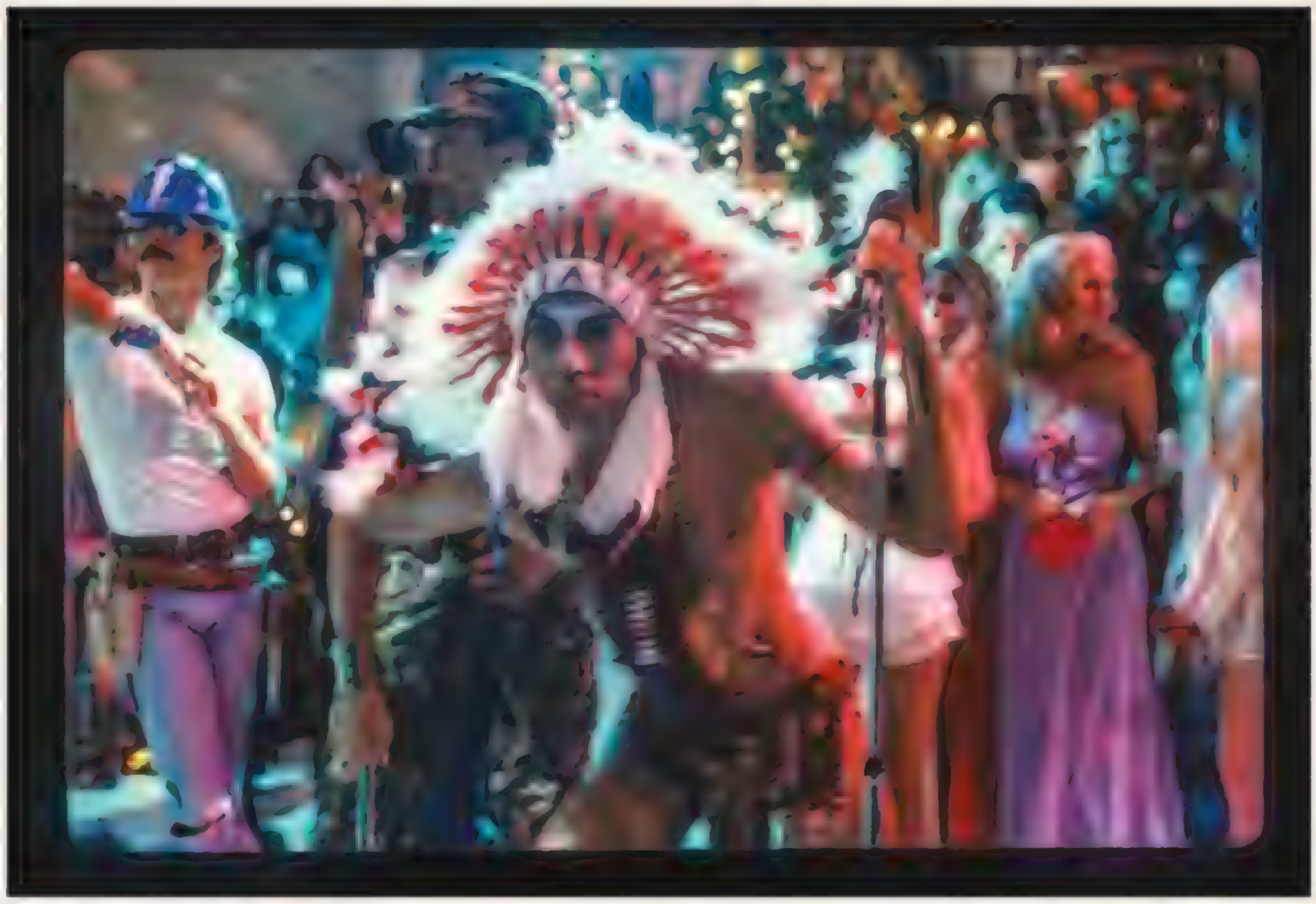
Everything about the Village People, from their image — exaggerated versions of masculine tropes — to the catchy, coded songs they recorded, was crafted through a queer lens. As the group's co-founder and manager Jacques Morali told *Rolling Stone* in 1978 about his motivation for creating the disco act, "Gay people have no [musical group]...nobody to personalize the gay people, you know?"

Arriving at the dawn of the 1970s, disco helped define a time of emerging liberation for LGBTQ America. After decades of suppression and erasure, the 1969 Stonewall riots and the gay civil rights movement had ushered in an era of relative openness among queer people. And the slinky, blissful grooves emanating from the disco scene provided a ubiquitous soundtrack at gay clubs across the country — safe havens where men could feel free to explore their sexuality.

As the story goes, it was a gay club in Greenwich Village that sparked the vision for the Village People, a group concept conceived by Morali and his business partner, Henri Belolo. Casablanca Records signed off on the project even before the producers began to recruit members, outside of singer Victor Willis.

Although disco was the rage among gay men, it was a genre dominated by female vocalists. Morali and Belolo, French immigrants looking to cash in on this latest American music craze, shrewdly saw a niche that had yet to be exploited and cobbled together a group to attract a gay male audience. Appropriating straight American masculinity served a dual purpose: Morali knew that strong male images — a cowboy, Native American, cop, soldier (or sailor), construction worker, biker — would titillate gay men and appeal to a broader (straighter) audience unable to decipher the gay innuendoes and double entendres sprinkled throughout the music. Although, as John Rockwell wrote in *The New York Times* in 1979, "those in the know (any five-year-old with a brain) can pick up on their homosexual subtexts."

The Village People's 1977 self-titled debut was so specifically gay, with songs about queer meccas such as San Francisco and



Opening page: *The 1979 Village People lineup — Randy Jones, David Hodo, Glenn Hughes, Victor Willis, Alex Briley and Felipe Rose — as photographed for a* PLAYBOY *article on audio tech.* ***Top:*** *Rose performs at the taping of the Playboy Roller Disco and Pajama Party.* ***Above:*** *"Leatherman" character Hughes; one of Wayland Flowers's puppets teased him during the program: "You Village People are my kind of people — tacky!"* ***Right:*** *The group gets its groove on dancing with the crowd in the Playboy Mansion's Great Hall.*

Fire Island, that member David Hodo (the construction worker) once described it as "possibly the gayest album ever." With their beefcake physiques, accentuated by costumes that displayed their bulging muscles, the Village People toyed with fantasy images to establish themselves as gay sex symbols — even if not every member identified as queer. They presented ideals that gay men could aspire to — the type of men they wanted to be, and the type of men they desired. *The Advocate*, the oldest gay magazine in America, declared the group "a godsend."

By 1979, the Village People were in their prime. The sextet had become a global phenomenon after the campy "Y.M.C.A." exploded on the pop charts, taking the group from a gay clubcircuit staple to an international crossover act in high demand. They toured North America, "Y.M.C.A." went to number one in multiple countries, and a $20 million musical comedy featuring their songs (*Can't Stop the Music*, a Razzie-award-winning flop) was released in June 1980. The Village People had become one of the hottest acts on the planet.

But then the group began to reverse course and rewrite their own narrative. Once open about the performers' sexual identities, by 1980, Morali was downplaying their sexuality.

"Look, the Village People is the only group that is black, white, straight and gay," Morali told PLAYBOY in a 1980 article in which he attempted to distance the group from any queer subtext. "They are successful because they represent many sides of America; because they are fun and sing happy songs," he said. "They are very much gay-influenced.... But they are not a gay group. To say this will kill them!"

To Morali, a gay man, it might have seemed that the group's commercial survival hung in the balance. Instead of pushing the cultural visibility of a marginalized community, he wanted to focus on appealing to the masses. The move was disappointing and startling; after all, the Village People's disco act had broken ground, achieving mainstream success without toning down their queer image — perhaps, in fact, by playing it up. But as their biggest hit, "Y.M.C.A.," ostensibly a paean to gay cruising, was being sung and danced to the world over, the group was pivoting away from fully claiming queerness.

HUGH HEFNER AND THE VILLAGE PEOPLE DIDN'T TARGET THE SAME AUDIENCES, BUT BOTH CREATED - AND CATERED TO - MALE FANTASIES.

The sanitization did not go unnoticed. "In order to get themselves on the Macy's float...and in the hope of getting their image slapped onto kids' lunch boxes, [the Village People] went along with the sexlessness that seems a precondition of gay male representation in pop culture," writes Alice Echols, historian and selfproclaimed "discologist," in her 2010 book *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*.

• • •

Yet at the Playboy Mansion in 1979, the Village People and their

***Top:** The Village People performed two songs for Playboy's Roller Disco and Pajama Party: "Rock and Roll Is Back Again" and "Ready for the '80s," both off their 1979 Live and Sleazy album. **Above:** Macho men in action at the Mansion.*

disco-fevered audience stood on the brink of monumental shifts that would forever change American culture. The death of disco at the turn of the 1980s gave way to dark years marked by Reaganomics, a devastating war on drugs and an AIDS epidemic that ravaged the same gay Edens the Village People sang about. It would be decades before a new era dawned for queer America: Today, medical advances have largely eradicated HIV's status as a death sentence; gay couples can walk down the aisle and adopt children; trans rights are at the forefront of a national movement. Queer culture has permeated the mainstream, and artists no longer feel the same pressure to stifle their sexuality in order to grow their careers.

Perhaps Morali and the Village People could not have foreseen this moment, one in which equality is closer at hand than ever before — and one in which the group's songs endure, beloved and enshrined in our musical history. But on that night 40 years ago, a leather daddy subversively sang to America about casual gay sex with a wink and a nod toward freedom. And Playboy was happy to host. ■

JOURNEY DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE.

PLAYBOY CLUB

PLAYBOY CLUB NEW YORK
RESTAURANT | BAR | LOUNGE | PRIVATE EVENTS

512 West 42nd Street,
New York, NY 10036

PLAYBOY CLUB LONDON
RESTAURANT | BAR | CASINO | PRIVATE EVENTS

14 Old Park Lane, Mayfair
London, United Kingdom
W1K 1ND

GENEROSITY.WATER

YOU RECEIVE A **31% DISCOUNTED RATE** WHEN BUYING THROUGH TAKEALOT.COM

PURCHASE A PACK OF 24X500ML FOR JUST R192

AVAILABLE ONLINE @ WWW.TAKEALOT.COM

takealot.com